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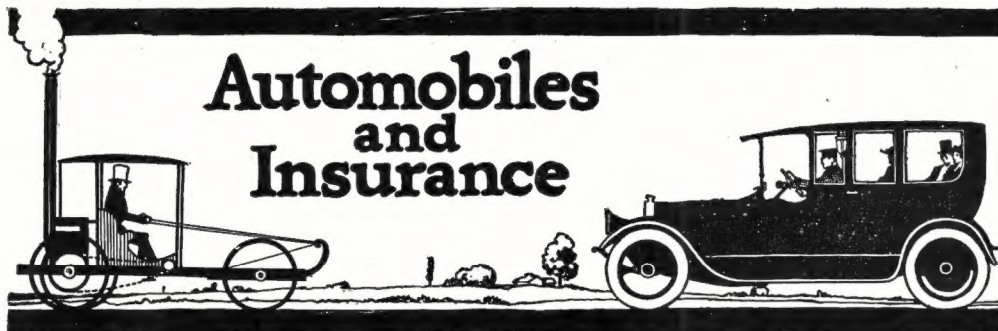
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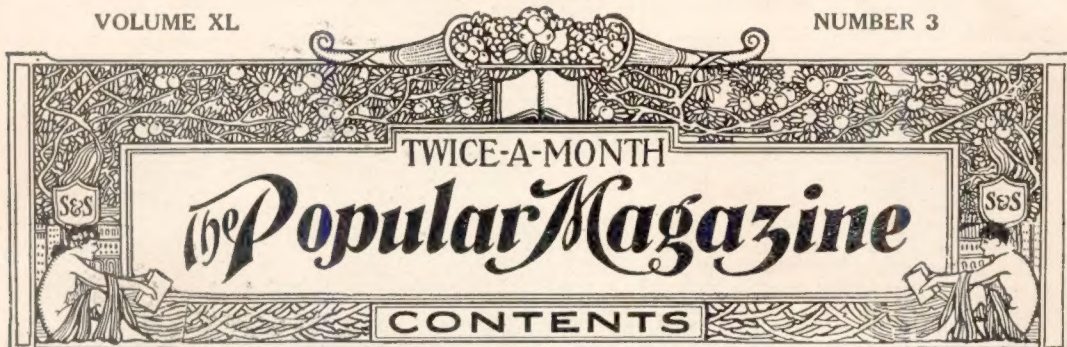
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VOLUME XL

NUMBER 3



APRIL 20th, 1916

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XL.

APRIL 20, 1916.

No. 3.

The Forty-Ninth Talesman

By Holman Day

Author of "The Red Lane," "Yankee Grit," Etc.

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CHAPTER I.

CHALLENGING THE TERRIBLE THING.

SO it came to this finally, in the case of Doctor Alvah Bingham, physician, surgeon, and scientist; the Terrible Thing, the foul fiend with which he had fenced and feinted, closed in at last and set loathsome and compelling clutch upon him and commanded him to surrender.

"Now you are mine!" declared the demon.

But manhood and ambition, sense of honor and of decency are tenacious of existence when one is under thirty years of age and when a last desperate determination spurs to action.

Doctor Bingham resolved to fight with both hands, with all his strength, all his mentality, and all his soul.

In his vigils and toils at the University of Medicine—in which the demon had craftily assisted him at first—he had been fighting the Thing with one hand, and only half his heart was in the undertaking.

One cannot fight a demon effectively under the eyes of men.

Doctor Bingham determined to go apart—into the secret places—in the great open—under the stars and the sun—and there clinch the Terrible Thing and with set teeth and rigid jaws and the awful resolution of despair battle until the end.

He sweated with the horror of the foreknowledge of what it was to be. He dared not tell himself that he would conquer. He said: "I will fight!" And so he stepped out from the ken of men and went away.

He did not say to the demon: "I am going to such and so." He knew that the Thing would go grimly with him. He did not know himself just where he was going. He felt that he would recognize the right and proper field for the fight when he laid eyes on it.

He saw open fields and crested hills and wooded ridges from the window of the car and stepped off the train at a village station. Without interest as to the locality, he noted that the name above the station platform was "Mon-mouth." He strode away up the village street and into the country beyond, swinging his little bag.

He walked far and rapidly, and just before the moist and mellow May dusk settled upon the valleys he came upon a great hulk of a house separated from all neighbors. Blank windows that were uncurtained stared into the red west. Rusty fir boughs still banked its sills. The clapboards were weather-washed, but there was considerable decayed stateliness about the building in spite of its unkemptness. There was an elderly man in the yard, and his appearance removed him from the class of yokels just as the sagging Corinthian pillars of the old house gave the building an aspect different from the farm-houses which Doctor Bingham had passed. The man wore a sun-faded frock coat, and his eyes were hawklike under jutting gray brows, and a roll of gray whiskers over his old-fashioned stock set off his gaunt face which had character, although it was cold and hard.

The road had been long and rough, the evening was settling, the loneliness of this landscape invited, and the man in the yard was not like the country folk who had stared at the tall young man plodding past their doors. The pallid, chill countenance of the master of this domain suggested entire lack of interest in the affairs of the world. In fact, after a careless glance at the pass-

ing stranger, the man resumed inspection of some litter in the yard.

"Here is a man who is inclined to mind his own business," decided Doctor Bingham, out of his knowledge of men. "And he looks as if he could make the people of his household mind theirs."

"Will you take a boarder for a time—will you take me?" he asked.

"No." It was curt refusal, with a touch of insolence in the snap of the tone.

"I beg your pardon for asking." The quiet dignity in the doctor's apology may have touched the man in the frock coat.

"I live here alone," he explained stiffly. "I wait and tend on myself. I have never had other folks messing around—not even a wife. And I don't advise you to board with anybody in this section. They are fools and rogues, all of them. The world is mostly filled with fools and rogues, but we have more of them here to the acre than anywhere else."

"Do you own those woods yonder on the hill?"

"I do."

"By any chance is there a shack or building there—or could I get permission to pitch a tent?"

"There is a sugar camp in the maple growth."

"Will you let it to me?"

"What for?"

"I am not well. I need to live in the open for a time."

One who has wrestled with a Terrible Thing must needs show marks of the struggle. The older man inspected this stranger and saw that he was pale with yellowish streakings under his eyes, that he jerked about strangely with muscular contractions which seemed to be involuntary.

"I am always suspicious about men. They are mostly rogues. What are you running away from?"

"From death."

The man softened visibly; there was almost a wail in the stranger's reply.

"You look respectable," he admitted, coming across the yard to the fence. "And something certainly is afoul of you. But I've got to know a man's name before I can do business with him. I am Zadoc Chutter. Well?"

"My name is Bingham. I am sick. I want a chance to get away by myself and get well."

"Without a doctor?"

"I am one."

Chutter reflected, fingering a thin ear.

"There's cookstove, bedding, and a few dishes in the camp. You can't hurt it much, whoever you are. You can have it for four dollars a month. But you mustn't come down here to the house and bother me."

"We'll make it a part of the trade that we won't bother each other. I want to be alone. Here's a month's rent." He passed over the money. His hands were shaking so violently that the crisp paper crackled in his grasp.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Chutter.

"What's that got to do with our trade?"

"Sure enough," said the old man, accepting the rebuke with grim serenity. "You seem to be one of my kind when it comes to tending strictly to private business."

"Where is that camp?"

"On top of the ridge—and that lane leads to it. About a mile. When do you want to move in?"

"Now."

Chutter glanced at the little bag, but he repressed questions.

"Suit yourself. I'll lend you a lantern. You can find your way—keep in the lane."

"I would like to buy a little cooked food until I can get some of my own in."

"I cook only for myself."

A cow loo-ed sleepily in Chutter's big barn, and the last stragglers from the poultry yard were crowding through the little door of the roost house.

"Sell me some milk and eggs, and I'll manage."

"I can do that much."

The old man went into his house, and, brief and laconic and even brusque as the dialogue had been, Doctor Bingham was glad to be alone without the need of talking. He quivered all through his being. His nerves seemed to tauten and relax spasmodically. It was a racking which produced exquisite torture. He clung to the palings of the fence to steady himself.

The night was down, and the stars were out, swimming above him in the moist haze of the spring. From a marsh somewhere came the lonesome shrilling of frogs, long-drawn, insistent, and never-ending. In the big house, a dim light moved behind the blank, uncurtained, dusty windows. It was all the sublimation of aloneness.

Bingham set his hands about the palings with a clutch which made his fingers ache. One elbow touched something hard in the breast pocket of his coat. He whispered: "Stay where you are, hands. Cling fast!"

The pain which tore at him angered him, set all his desperate stubbornness at bay. And then unutterable weariness, when his tortured nerves relaxed, came to tempt him. A mile more—a mile up a dark lane into the loneliness of the woods. One must needs reach the chosen field of combat in fair condition if one is to fight for victory.

"No," said Bingham aloud. "I am in the open. I am here to fight. I began to fight ten hours ago, when I walked out of the university. I told you I had begun to fight."

Then, for the first time, he saw the demon.

For the first time, hallucination threw before his eyes what appeared to be form and substance—a vision that was the precursor of the after phantasmagoria of the unreal which in the end so adroitly mingled with the real that his tired brain, his bewildered senses gave up the struggle to distinguish the fancy from the fact.

The demon stood before him and smiled on him. Bingham did not understand at first that this was the demon because the expression on the countenance was tolerant and genial and the garb was the garb of a gentleman.

"I don't want any unfair advantage. I am the demon." Then Bingham understood that this was his foe. "You are not yet on the ground where we are to settle our little differences. It's a long walk—uphill—in the dark. Better take one shot—you really need it. I am just as good a doctor as you are." And from the pocket of his frock coat he extracted a small, flat, black case and extended it. "I want you to be standing up man fashion when we come to the clinch."

"Keep your advice and your favors. The fight is on," declared Bingham.

And then he blinked his eyes and saw that Zadoc Chutter had come to the palings; the old man held out a ruck bag in the corner of which something bulged.

"What's that you say?" inquired the man at the fence testily. "Fight on what?"

"I didn't say anything," stammered Bingham. "I didn't say anything to you."

"You said something."

"I was—was humming a tune."

"You're a poor singer. Here's your eggs, your can of milk. You owe me seventy-five cents. The lantern I'll furnish free. The camp isn't locked. Be careful of fire. You'll find dry wood

under the floor. When you've used it, go cut your own. Good night."

So Bingham, carrying his slight burdens, climbed over the bars and began his march up over the soggy sward of the winding lane. There were bowlders and ruts here and there. There were sharp little rises where the hill was terraced; there followed long slopes of steady climbing. After a time, he began to stagger. He could feel his legs bend under him as if the bones had become whalebone strips without stiffness to support his body; then the bones seemed to be mere gristle, which curved and sagged and would not spring back into position. He sat down on a bowl-der and rested. He was in the woods, far up the hillside, but he could not estimate how far he had come. It was dark under the trees, and his lantern had cast only a little circle of glimmer about him as he walked. Only by his weariness could he guess that he had covered much of the distance; yet he knew that miles in the woods are far more elastic than miles on the pavements.

Small animals shuffled near him in the dry leaves which the spring greenery had not as yet muffled with fresh growth. Though the marsh was far distant, the everlasting shrilling of the frogs throbbed against his eardrums in that hush. There were louder rustlings, and he wondered what manner of creatures were moving outside that little circle of lantern glow. Instead of the pitter-pat of small feet, heard at first, he seemed to feel, rather than hear, heavy thuddings as if some plantigrade monster were strolling in that vicinity.

In his fresh panic, his shattered nerves throbbing with new tremors, he felt that he wanted to have walls about him—something against which to set his back—only one door to guard instead of being set in the immensity of nature with all avenues open toward him. Those avenues seemed to be

thronging that night with hosts of the unknown converging upon him as a focus. He rose and staggered on. But his legs doubled under him, and he swung in a half circle and sat down upon a tree trunk.

Before, he had been astonished when the demon appeared to him and advised and coaxed him. Now he was surprised because the demon did not take advantage of the situation to press his offer once more.

Bingham, his brain dizzy and his fears tumultuous, decided in the haste of his emotions that the demon was now sure of him in the place where he sat, alone in the forest, utterly prostrated. Of course, the Thing would not advise him to rescue himself.

A black monster, so tall that his bulk blotted stars, passed close beyond the lantern's feeble rays, and his dragging fur exhaled vile odors. Bingham strove to convince himself that this was a vision—that the demon had been a vision—that he must not loose his grip on his common sense. He had blinked his eyes across the palings and Zadoc Chutter stood there. But now, as he stared into the surrounding darkness, peering over his shoulders to right and left, he only blinked into being still more terrifying visions. The black pall of the night was broken by gleaming eyes and thrusting snouts of unclean creatures. He dug his thumbs against his burning eyeballs, but the hideous unreal persisted. His sense of the actual flickered like a candlelight on which a draft played; he knew that the monster who came past him again and more closely was a chimera, but he shrank and cowered; he wanted to rise and run and shout his fears, but he could not.

This place—alone in the woods—night pressing on him—it was not the field of combat—it was not giving his manhood sensible and proper opportu-

nity. Doctor Bingham told himself that.

"I am not surrendering or compromising," he said aloud. "But I'm going to meet you and fight you in a place where I can stand up and do it man fashion."

He fumbled in his breast pocket, and pulled out the hard object which his elbow had been touching. It was a small, flat, black case. He twitched the leg of his trousers to the knee, and pinched a fold of flesh on his thin shank.

The prick of the needle was grateful pain. In all his agonized being he knew what that quick thrill in his flesh signaled. After a time, he opened his eyes. There were no more monsters. Bland, serene, beautiful night was about him. He stretched out his arms to it and welcomed it.

"Here is the place I have been looking for," he cried. "I am in the blessed open. I am where a man should fight the man's fight."

Sleepy birds in the trees over his head gurgled dozy little chuckles of avian laughter, as if they were glad of his companionship. There was comforting neighborliness in the quiet seclusion. There were no human eyes to spy him, to mistrust him, to pity him. Those eyes had been stirring his rancor in the months that had passed. He could mind his own business here.

He rose from the tree trunk, and felt the exaltation of being where he had longed to be.

He wondered just why, only a few moments before, he had feared the wonderful peace of the honest woods; from boyhood he had sought them and had wandered in them, alone and unafraid. It must be that the city had dulled his memory and had spoiled him, and the woods had seemed suddenly strange to him; but now he had recovered his poise—knew he was at home once more. The tremors of his

frame were gone. He leaped upon the tree trunk and drew in deep inhalations of the spring balm.

"Now I'll show you that it isn't compromise," he said. "I am awake from this time on, and you can't scare me with shadows."

He stepped down from the tree, shut his eyes, and turned himself on the balls of his feet until he lost all sense of direction. Then he flung the black case and its contents from him with all his strength, and continued to turn himself until right or left, north or south, were utterly confused in his senses.

"So that is the end of that!" he said after he had opened his eyes and had picked up the ruck bag and his lantern.

He strode up the lane at a brisk gait, leaping over rocks and ruts, and soon came to the camp in the maple wood.

It seemed wholly desirable as a hermitage; the ground was high here. There were no shaggy, dark nooks of undergrowth. The stars were revealed through the spacious vistas among the trees.

Bingham set the lantern inside the little camp, and came forth and stared into the night until his eyes became accustomed to the darkness and he could see into the depth of things, no longer hampered by the glimmer of light which had circumscribed his vision.

"This is the place—and I am not afraid," he murmured. "And now I will 'Wrap the drapery of my couch about me, and lie down to pleasant dreams.'"

CHAPTER II.

WHAT ONE SEES CAN ONE BELIEVE?

Doctor Alvah Bingham was in no mood to be interested in any of human-kind except himself that day.

He was crawling on his hands and knees through coppice and brake, over logs and under bushes.

To the person who appeared at a little distance from him he gave a mere flick of a glance—hardly as much attention as he gave to an occasional toad which floundered soggily out from under his groping hands. A man less absorbed in his own affairs would have given this person who appeared, scrutiny which combined curiosity and amazement.

He was a sort of human toad on crutches—a dwarfed, misshapen lump of a man whose head was a knob between upthrusting shoulders, and whose body was warped miserably. His arms were longer than his legs, and with his short crutches assisting his locomotion, one side of him moving at a time, he seemed to be going on all fours.

He was sniffing and whining and groaning querulously. But even that display of woe did not provoke an extra glance from the man who went on, thrusting through the bushes on his hands and knees. Doctor Bingham had heart, soul, and mind centered desperately on his own troubles that day.

"Another one of 'em," he muttered. "Just another! I'll not bother to beat him into nothingness. It will take up valuable time. I must keep on hunting."

A few rods back, he had paused to attack some nameless sort of a brute, and had awakened to find himself thwacking a bush with a cudgel.

The shuffling dwarf halted in the doctor's path.

"That's it!" he snarled in cracked falsetto. "Men everywhere. No hole or corner where they won't find you!"

"Devils everywhere—spawn of the big one!" muttered Bingham. "There's no use stopping to beat them up. I must keep hunting for it."

He crawled along, and came close to the misshapen man, disregarding his presence. Bingham's eyes searched the ground avidly, his hands pawed in the leaf mold, and explored hollows. The

dwarf bent lower on his crutches and peered into the doctor's face. Then he squalled so astonishingly loud that Bingham raised himself and squatted on his haunches to survey this interloper.

"You're the one—you're the man!" squealed the dwarf.

Bingham seemed to take little interest in the accusation.

"What if I am?" he mumbled. "Go tell your father that I'm still fighting."

"You're the man! I remember you. Why shouldn't I remember you? I wouldn't have done it if you hadn't encouraged me in it."

Bingham blinked his eyes, hoping to drive away the vision in that manner. Often he had been able to do that. But when he opened them the gnarled hobgoblin was still there.

"You get out! Go away! Or I shall get up and beat you with a club."

"Oh, not you! You'd be afraid of spoiling me for what you want of me. You are too shrewd to knock me about with any club. Look what you have brought me to!"

He eased himself on one crutch, and pointed to a piece of rope which was coiled about his shoulders.

"I am out here hunting for a hidden place to hang myself—where no man can find me—so that the knives can't hack me—where I'll be no good to you when they do find me."

"Go hang yourself. I don't care. I'm busy. Get out!"

Bingham dropped to his hands, and went on searching.

"That's right! You want me to do it here, where you can watch till it's done and then take me for your knives. You have followed me here so that you can get me the minute it's done. But I am as shrewd as you are, Doctor Bingham."

The fact that this stranger knew his name stirred no interest in the doctor. Of course the demon and all his breed

knew the name of the man they were fighting.

"I don't want you," he said over his shoulder, crawling on his course.

"You lie! You can't fool me. You and your gang of slashers and sawyers at that college wanted me so much that you gave me two hundred dollars to have my body after I'm dead."

Doctor Bingham halted and looked back at the man, and then arose to his feet. For a moment his zeal as physician and scientist overcame his absorption in his own bitter trouble, made him forget lancinating pain, hideous nerve torture, and all the awful prostration which had taken away his interest in mankind.

"So you're that chap, eh?"

"I'm Robert Chutter. You needn't say you don't remember me. You looked over every inch of me a year ago. Heart on the wrong side, kidney upside down, lungs——"

"You need not bother to take account of stock," broke in the doctor, his tones dry. "I remember your specifications. On my advice, the university paid to you, cash in hand, two hundred dollars, and you gave a writing that we could have your body after death for dissection. You're not trying to back out, are you?"

"I won't be cut up. I have got new light on what comes after death. I'm afraid."

"That's no affair of mine. The trade has been made. It will make no difference to you, man. There's nothing after death, so far as your mere body goes. You'll never know."

"But my family will."

"You made oath in that paper that you had no family to interfere."

"It's my sister; she's the only one who will care. And I care. There will be all those knives and saws. I'm afraid. I want to die where they can't find me."

The miserable creature began to weep

with so much abandon, and there was so much helpless misery in his aspect, that for a moment the doctor gave over the search upon the ground to which he had returned.

"Go to the university with your two hundred dollars and tell your story, and they may be willing to cancel the paper. Don't bother me with your troubles."

"But you're the one I traded with. I look to you!"

"You need not, my man. I have nothing more to do with the matter."

"But I can't get the money. I have tried. I have begged. I would steal it if I knew where to steal. But I can't get it. And I may die any time where they can find me and haul me to those doctors."

"You had no business making a bargain if you didn't intend to do your part. What did you do with the money?"

"I bought a diamond ring for a girl."

This confession was so amazing that Doctor Bingham rose and stepped back and gazed down on this grotesque antithesis of all that woman would look for in a man.

"You needn't sneer," sniffled the dwarf. "You are handsome and tall, but you needn't sneer at me. You may think you have been in love, but you have never been in love so much and so many times as I have."

"There's no opportunity for argument, Chutter. I have never been in love at all. And I don't think I'd ever be in love enough to sell my body so as to give a girl a gewgaw."

"A man that's handsome and tall doesn't have to give a girl anything. But look at me! My body doesn't have anything to do with the romance that's in me. No man ever loved women the way I do. I can't think of anything except love. And they won't look at me or let me talk to 'em unless I give 'em presents. She made believe love me till she got the ring, and then she went

away and married a man. Oh, if I could only come across them!"

It came to Bingham, looking down on the dwarf's contorted face, that he had never seen the scroll of physiognomy reveal uglier and more malevolent inward passion. Lust of murder glowed in the deep-set eyes, and the big hands at the ends of the prodigious arms closed and unclosed with covetousness of prey. The sticks, thrust deep into the soil, supported him under his armpits, and his hands were free. He snatched the cord from his shoulders, and snarled:

"It's no use! Wherever I go to hang myself there's a man. I'll find a fiery furnace and jump in. You'll never have me to hack and saw at."

In his rage he twisted the cord about his hands, and snapped it as if it had been grocer's twine.

"I hope you'll never come across them where you can corner them," vouchsafed the doctor. "You might do something very bad to anybody you didn't like with those hands of yours."

"My arms and hands have lugged me around for a good many years; they ought to be strong. I wish I knew where a pot with two hundred dollars was buried under one of these trees. I'd pull the tree up; I could do it. And there may be money buried in these woods for all I know. Lots of folks wonder where he does keep his money. They say he doesn't put it away in banks."

In spite of his anxiety to be at his search—in spite of the horrible yearning for a sight of that flat, black case which he had flung far from him in his defiance of the demon—Doctor Bingham found much in this creature which excited his professional interest. He continued to listen.

"He has a lot of money. If he doesn't get mad with me and my sister, we will be rich some day. If he doesn't get mad and make a will and leave us

out, we'll be rich. We're the heirs." The dwarf had suddenly lost his demoniac expression. With husky, lustful tone, he seemed to fondle that hope of riches. "It's only a case of having enough money. Then there'll be women who will have me near them and be glad to have me. He's old, and he can't live forever. And he hates churches; he hates missionary societies; he hates everybody. So why shouldn't his money come to me and my sister? We're the only heirs. It will come to us."

"Whose money are you talking about, Chutter?"

"My Uncle Zadoc's money. He owns these woods. He owns all about 'most as far as you can see. And he has money—lots of it. And my father had money, too. But he ran away somewhere years ago and carried his money with him. He was a twin with Uncle Zadoc. And because of that, Uncle Zadoc has helped my sister and me, but he is stingy, and she has had to teach school and I have traveled about and soldered pots and pans in the tinker's trade. And that work has kept me unhappy, for I have had to trade and dicker with the womenfolk, and I have had to look at them and know that they shivered every time they looked at me."

"You'd better borrow the money of your uncle," advised Doctor Bingham indifferently. He felt that he had probed the soul of this unfortunate, and knew all his life story that was interesting. Besides, the torment of his longing was driving him back to his own affairs. He began to peer about him.

"You wouldn't be advising me that way if you had ever seen my Uncle Zadoc."

"I have seen him."

"Then where were your eyes if you don't understand that he'd never lend me money after he had found out why

I want it? You know he wouldn't give me the money—now, don't you?" The dwarf was showing the testy, snappish humor of his kind, and was following Doctor Bingham and was distinctly irritating. "You know he wouldn't do it—eh?"

"Probably he would not."

"And when he found out what I had done he would cut me out of my share by a will."

"It would be just like him." The doctor was curt, exhibiting no further interest in Chutter's woes.

"You got me into the scrape by encouraging me to sell myself. You are bound to have me. It will be just like you to go and tell him all about it, so that I'll never have enough money to buy myself back. You doctors want to cut and hack, and you don't care anything about anybody's feelings. You have come here to show me up and make sure of me, now haven't you? What are you doing, hanging around my uncle's farm?"

Bingham turned suddenly, and his face was close to the outthrust, lowering countenance of the dwarf. The doctor's eyes were flaming and compelling. He understood the power of a stare in the case of cowards and animals. Chutter ceased to bristle, and backed away, beginning to whine again.

Bingham knew that he was losing control of himself. Again his senses, under strain of his condition, were playing him false. The misshapen man was capering on top of a bush without bending a twig. Bingham gazed and was sure of it. To be sure, a man like him had sold himself to the university, but this could not be the actual person. Dream and reality had become mingled, and the doctor gave up all effort to separate fact from fancy.

"I'm fighting them," he muttered, struggling to get upon his feet. "That's the only way to get peace for myself—fight! I'll beat him up, and he'll

turn into a bush—and then I'll have peace."

He picked up a stake some wood hauler had lost, and advanced on Chutter with such savage mien that the dwarf made off with all speed of crutches, arms, and flopping legs, squealing as stridently as a pig in the hands of a butcher.

"Robert! I hear you! Where are you? I'm here hunting for you. Robert! Robert! Why are you doing such a wicked thing?"

It was a girl's voice, and it conveyed such anguish of apprehension that even the whirling senses of Bingham were touched.

She came running through the wood, bursting out of the coppice like a frightened dryad, and Doctor Bingham, his brain clearing at sight of something sane and normal, needed no explanation to inform him that this was the sister of whom the dwarf had spoken. In spite of her evident terror, she promptly exhibited the female's instinctive impulse to protect her own. She hurried between the two men, and the doctor lowered the upraised stake.

"What is it? What does it mean?" she gasped. She turned on her brother. "Robert, you left that wicked, wicked letter! I hurried. I have been hunting all through the woods. You were seen coming this way. Your letter—you said——"

"I said I was going to hide away and hang myself," said the sullen dwarf. "But nobody will mind his own business. I want to hang myself. And there stands the man who has driven me to it."

Doctor Bingham tossed the stake upon the ground, and raised his hat.

"I beg your pardon," he said, his anger sharpening his speech, "but your brother—providing he is your brother—is as crooked in his statements as he is in his body."

In spite of himself, his eyes shifted

when she looked at him reproachfully. She was distinctly a handsome young woman, and her beauty impressed even Doctor Bingham, who appraised her curves and contour with a physician's indifferent eye; she looked like an outdoor girl, well rounded and vigorous. Haste had dashed extra color upon her cheeks, and excitement gave her added animation. She wore a tam knitted cap, which was a bit awry, and this emphasized her individuality; it was like the cock of the bonnet feather, revealing self-reliance. Now she quickly recovered her poise, seeming to feel the call of emergency. She had broken in on a scene which puzzled and distressed her.

"I'll admit all my brother's faults," she said. "But his condition ought to save him from being beaten by an able-bodied man."

"I am not in the habit of assaulting cripples, but this man has annoyed me, and I was—but no matter. I wish you would take him away."

"Ask him for it, Laura," pleaded the dwarf. "He'll give it to you—he can't say 'no' to you! Make him give you the paper which says they can cut me up after I'm dead."

She questioned the doctor mutely with astonished gaze—apparently unable to frame a question to meet this amazing situation.

"When I was connected with the university," said the doctor coldly, stung into frank exposure of her brother by the flash in her eyes, "this man came and voluntarily disposed of his body to be delivered to the institution after his death. I have no control over the matter at present. I cannot even say whether the university would be willing to give up its claims providing the money should be proffered in return."

"It's two hundred dollars," whined the dwarf.

"At least you can use your influence

to have such a shameful bargain canceled if the money is returned," said the girl. "Robert has been a trial many times for me, but this is too terrible to endure."

"I am wholly absorbed in my own affairs—and troubles."

Laura Chutter glanced at him sharply, for his tones broke on the last word.

"I had lost control of myself when you saw me threatening your brother. I am ill. I am not fit for human society. I am sorry I cannot assist you, but you will find the university folks ready to listen to you, I am sure." He turned abruptly and walked away.

She hesitated a moment, and then hurried after him and touched him on his arm. He leaped and whirled on her with such disconcerting suddenness that both of them stared at each other and were silent, trembling.

"You see!" he said after a time, smiling wistfully and spreading his hands before him.

"I am used to those who are ill—or in trouble. I have seen so much of it! I'm afraid I talked rudely. But Robert left this letter behind." She showed the crumpled sheet. "I was frightened, and I came hunting for him. He does strange things. I understand that he must have annoyed you greatly, for I know how he talks. Isn't there something that I—that we—can do to help you? I can see that you are ill. I am used to helping those who are ill." It was said frankly, out of the womanly impulse to bind a wound.

He stared at her, a strange expression in his eyes. It came to him all of a sudden that never in his life had a woman offered him pity or help. His work had been his mistress through toiling days and weary nights. And when brain and nerve and fiber failed, he had lashed on his flagging energies

for more sacrifices in her behalf. And she had never given him pity. She had taken all and had given him the Terrible Thing for his foe.

This radiant woman who so suddenly offered him what he had never received before—a woman's honest and unselfish pity—stirred new and wonderful emotions in him.

In his weakness, his despair, his pain, he felt a child's desire to put his head on her shoulder and weep. There were tears in his eyes. He told himself, but he could not convince himself, that he was Doctor Alvah Bingham, callous scientist and physician. He did not in the least understand his new emotion. All the props on which he had built his character and conduct seemed to have been swept out from under him all of a sudden. He was fighting back a longing to have this woman caress and comfort him. It was not mere banal desire to take her into his arms. As a scientist, he gave an instant's thought to the matter, and diagnosed his feelings and regained some of his self-respect when he was convinced that this was not mere surrender to a woman's charms. He simply wanted to put his head on her shoulder and sob out his confession.

"And that means that it has come at last. I am insane," Doctor Bingham told himself. "But I must hide it from her."

"I'm afraid there's nothing you can do," he replied gently, holding curb on his emotions. "But I shall never forget you and how you have made this offer to me, a stranger. It means more than I can explain just now. My own troubles have been making me selfish and unfeeling. I will write to the university. If the money is returned, I think they will surrender their claims. I'm sure they will. It's too distressing as it stands."

"I thank you. But I hope you'll un-

derstand that I was not offering my help in order to wheedle you into helping us."

He looked down into her honest gray eyes.

"It was rather forward in me," she added. "But it's my impulse to offer to help those who are in trouble. Perhaps it comes from having to care for my poor brother."

His tremors were returning. He closed his eyes in order to shut out spectacles which were making his brain swirl. The young woman had suddenly become transformed into something which his heart told him she was not.

She seemed to be ogling him with passionate eyes and holding up pouting lips for him to kiss.

"I am going to take Robert to Uncle Zadoc," she said. "If he will lend the money, we can work hard and pay it back."

"We mustn't tell Uncle Zadoc," protested Chutter. He had crawled close to them. "If he knows, he won't leave us his money."

"We can live without his money," declared the sister. "We need our peace of mind now, Robert, more than we need his money after he is dead."

"I need his money," he squalled. "I have plans. If I am rich——"

He stopped, and Doctor Bingham opened his eyes and saw that the girl was holding her hand over the dwarf's mouth.

"We must be going," said the young woman. "I am sorry you are ill."

"I shall never forget," stated Doctor Bingham.

He stood with bared head until the strange couple had disappeared down the woodland vistas. Then other shapes, forming stranger contrasts still, came and stood before him or frolicked about him.

"Oh, where is it—where did I throw it?" moaned Bingham, dropping to his knees and starting anew on his search.

CHAPTER III.

TO REPEAT: WHAT ONE SEES CAN ONE BELIEVE?

Time, its lapse, its hours or occasions ceased to be of moment to Bingham. Morn or noon, it did not matter so long as the daylight enabled him to hunt in the leafy hollows of the woods. Frantic haste of search settled into numb stubbornness of despair. His reasoning powers were dulled. His thoughts were centered on the one object, the black case. If the idea came to him to give over the hunt and go forth into the world in quest of another black case and its contents, he raised his voice and declared to the demon that he would not be thus cajoled.

"I have come here to fight—and I'm going to stay!"

He still insisted that he was fighting; his muddled wits did not discriminate between the fight and the search.

And what he saw he did not believe.

He so told himself constantly, in order that his attention might not be distracted from his quest.

"They are not there," he said, and he did not waste his valuable time by attacking them. Everlastingly he denied the evidence of his senses. Therefore, by dint of disregarding, he came to have a pretty firm belief, for his own consolation, in the nothingness of everything.

And on account of that mental conviction, Doctor Alvah Bingham, though his normal acumen was keen and his sane senses alert as scientist and physician, made a strange—almost an unbelievable—figure in the tragedy which later shocked the town of Monmouth.

If Bingham saw, or if it seemed to him that he saw, the dwarf clinging to tree branches by his huge hands, mouthing and grimacing like an ape, he accepted the spectacle with serene indifference.

If Laura Chutter came and beckoned

to him to go with her down the forest aisles, he turned his back and kept on at the employment to which he had set himself.

"I am fighting the man's fight," he called to her. "I don't dare to go with you. I'd put my head on your shoulder and weep."

Then he was promptly ashamed of forgetting himself and calling aloud.

"She is not there," he told himself. "Nobody is there."

But in the evening's dusk he found in the sugar camp a man who sat at the little table and was unwrapping a lunch of beef and bread. Bingham was resolved to humor hallucination no longer. He went directly to the table and endeavored to sit on the chair which the intruder occupied. A thrust by vigorous arms indicated that this was not a chimera. Doctor Bingham staggered away and surveyed the man, and was unable to blink him out of vision. The intruder was certainly Zadoc Chutter. He was tall and gaunt, and the roll of gray whiskers banked his chin.

"I have hired this camp of you, and I do not care for visitors," said Bingham.

"You did not hire it from me," said the other. "I didn't know you were here."

"But you are Zadoc Chutter."

"No, I'm not."

"Then you are nothing, like the rest, even if you did push me off that chair. I'll pay no further attention to you."

He staggered to the little closet where he kept his scanty store of eggs. He told himself that the man would not be there when he looked again.

But the man was there, and he was staring at Bingham with such queer intentness of regard that the latter's quick temper flamed.

"You needn't goggle at me as if you think I'm a lunatic. And I'd rather be a crazy man than a nothing.

I'll give you something to pay for that push you gave me."

There was a bar of iron in the camp's corner—a poker for the sap fires.

Bingham seized it and started for the intruder, swinging the weapon menacingly. The man scabbled together his beef and bread in the crackling paper and hurried out of the camp, and the dusk hid him.

"They're all alike—some more persistent than the others," declared the doctor. "Evidence of the senses! Bah!"

He broke eggs into a cup, swallowed them raw, and threw himself upon his cot. But sleep would not come to him, though unutterable weariness weighed upon him; his muscles ached, and the galled skin of his hands and knees smarted. But restlessness, too imperious to be denied, would not suffer him to lie there. He got up and lighted the lantern and started out.

His first impulse was to continue his hunt for the black case. But after a few strides down the hill, he turned and walked in the opposite direction.

"I'm doing it," he whispered to himself. "Bless God, I'm doing it!"

It was almost ecstatic, that whisper. Before, he had been shouting defiance to the demon. His fight had been delirious and desperate. Now, when he turned his back on the place where he had flung away the black case, something warming—a mild glow of encouragement—thrilled him. In the past, the hot fever of combat had possessed him and the reaction had been prostrating. Somehow he was not as weary—he did not stagger about so weakly.

He decided to walk—to keep walking, trying to calm his nerves. The lane led on up over the ridge. In the narrow circle of light cast by the lantern, he saw no forbidding spectacles; he heard sounds, but he saw nothing, and was thankful.

The matter of the man who had

seemed to be Zadoc Chutter did not especially disturb him now as he pondered on the happening. Providing that his visions were normal, instead of grotesque, he felt that he could endure through the test. In the end, if he were not terrified into surrender by trials of hallucination too horrible to be endured, unreality must give way to reality—his senses could be believed. He dared not hope that he had won over the worst of it. As a physician, he understood all the vagaries of habit. But this partial truce was giving him courage to face new ordeals.

The lane was not straight. It swung in wide circles and led him afar, but he did not mind. He thanked God in whispers that he was able to walk, and that some of the fever of unrest was calmed within him. He came out into open ground and crossed fields where the fresh grass matted broad expanses and spread grateful carpet for his feet.

All at once he was hailed:

"My man, won't you come here with your lantern?"

And while he hesitated, striving to bolster his sanity by telling himself that there was no voice, the unknown came nearer, reassuring him by explanation:

"You needn't be alarmed, my man. I started to walk across lots to the other road, and I have lost my way. Help me along with your lantern, and I'll make it right with you."

"You're really a—a man, are you?" faltered Bingham.

"Very much so." The man who was just outside the circle of lantern light chuckled. "Go on ahead!"

"I do not know this country about here. Which way?"

"Zigzag until the light shows us a path. I lost it in the darkness. Then straight on."

Bingham obeyed, glad that he had been commandeered. It gave him excuse to keep on walking.

The unknown followed behind, well

beyond the illumination cast by the lantern. At last a path, marked by a shallow rut through the grass, was revealed.

"This is it," stated the man behind. "It's all right when we have a light, but it's blind in the dark."

They walked on, and exchanged no more words.

After a long tramp, Bingham found a low stone wall closing the end of the path, and he lifted his lantern and saw the highway on the other side. He clambered over, but instead of keeping on he whirled suddenly and held up the lantern. His intent was generous; he wanted to light the way over the wall. It was plain that the man behind had not anticipated this service. He had his leg over the wall, and their faces were close, the lantern between.

The man on the wall had his cap pulled low, and his coat collar was turned up. But his face was not wholly concealed.

The man with the lantern clucked a startled expletive.

He was staring into the astonished countenance of his excellency, Anson Stewart, governor of the State.

Doctor Bingham needed no introduction. A few weeks before, he had piloted the new governor through the university in order that the chief executive might be fully informed regarding the institution's value as a State asset. And Bingham remembered how illy the silk hat and frock coat seemed to suit the man whose political nickname was "Old Rough and Ready." The cap and slouchy overcoat seemed to be more proper garb for this elderly hard-shell with the seamed face and the hawk's-beak nose. And on that day of the governor's official visit, Doctor Bingham had, by recourse to the needle, been particularly brilliant, and had felt peculiarly fit.

"Good Lord—Doctor Bingham!

You?" His excellency exploded the syllables of the question.

"Yes, Governor Stewart." And yet in his inner soul, Bingham was trying to convince himself that this was all illusion. This that he was looking on could not be so; the governor of the State wandering at night in the fields! It must be part and parcel of the illusion that had presented the simulacrum of Zadoc Chutter.

"What are you doing in these parts?" There was exasperation almost in the demand.

"I—I am taking a vacation. I—I have been tied up too closely—have been working too hard," faltered the doctor.

"You look it," said the governor in gentler tones. "But you gave me a start. I hadn't noticed you—I thought I had enlisted some farmer man."

He completed his clamber over the wall, and stood looking down on the ground, fingering his nose, plainly absorbed in thought.

Then he roused himself, and said hastily: "I left my horse and carriage yonder under that oak. You may as well light me that far if you please."

He unhitched the horse, turned on the doctor as if to speak, and then crawled slowly and stiffly into the carriage. He straightened the reins, and the horse moved on a few steps.

"Good night, governor," said Bingham respectfully. He had not yet convinced himself that this was actuality, but he decided to be polite, even in the case of a vision, providing the vision was the executive who held the affairs of the State university under his thumb.

The governor pulled the horse to a sudden stop.

"Look here, Doctor Bingham," he blurted, "you know something about politics, don't you?"

"Not much, governor. I have stuck too closely to my work inside of four walls."

"You understand that a man in the political game is called on to do strange things, don't you?"

"I have heard so, governor."

"We politicians have a name for some things we do. We call a little trip like this 'pussy-footing.' It's simply politics, Doctor Bingham; simply politics. You understand." His tone was more confident as he talked. He seemed to be prodding himself out of a condition of consternation. "And a good job of political pussy-footing is often spoiled if anybody talks about it. I want to ask you to keep this little affair under your hat."

"I will say nothing about it, your excellency, if that is your wish."

"It's a little more than a wish. It's orders—from headquarters. See? In a way you're a State officer, Bingham. A State appropriation pays your salary. Say nothing!"

"I will say nothing. It's politics. That's enough for me."

"Just the right idea, doctor! Fine! And I'm glad I met you as I did. We feel better acquainted. Something to your advantage may develop out of it." It was a politician's ready promise. "If old Mother Good Luck doesn't stub her toe, I'll be governor of this State for some little time. Now I bid you good night, and I hope your rest will do you a lot of good."

He drove away.

"He seemed to be real," pondered Doctor Bingham, standing there under the oak tree. "But in the case of the man—the man seemed to be Zadoc Chutter. However, probably he was not. Zadoc Chutter would not come to my camp to eat bread and beef out of a paper. That isn't the nature of a man like Chutter."

He began to probe into the psychic side of the affair in his thoughts, trying to analyze from the scientist's standpoint. In this new phase of the upheaval of his senses, could the being

be real and yet seem to be another individual?

Had his mental agony and his physical torments left him in a state where fevered imagination translated the evidence of the senses as it willed in its extravagance? The fact that the intruder in the camp seemed to be Zadoc Chutter, his landlord, was explainable on the ground of the association of ideas, providing he admitted that fancy was teaming his senses. As to the matter of one who appeared to be Governor Anson Stewart wandering in the fields—Doctor Bingham sighed and resolved to give over the analysis of his psychic condition. He felt that he was stepping over the line of sanity.

The night was warm and invited him. The open was serene and comforting. A consoling drowsiness weighed down his eyelids. He had worked his physical system to the extent that demanded rest. He climbed back over the stone wall, sat down under a tree, and blew out his lantern. With his head against the bark, and with the leaves whispering over his head, he forgot his troubles in unconsciousness that was part sleep and part stupor.

When he woke, the morning was gray about him and weird with mist. Trees loomed to gigantic height, and robins, who bobbed along the sward near by, were distorted to the size of barnyard fowls. Sounds were magnified, as well as objects, and the shrill calls of cocks, the mooing of cattle, and cheeping of birds made the intervals of hush more profound.

A man came out of the swimming vapor and strode past. He was partly enshrouded, partly clear to the vision of the man under the tree. In the fog, he seemed to be of heroic size. He was tall and gaunt, and there was a roll of whisker under his chin.

"Mr. Chutter!" called Bingham. He felt desperate need of confirming some of his impressions.

The man halted and peered about.

"You are Zadoc Chutter, aren't you?" asked the doctor. "I want to speak with you."

Bingham was cramped by his posture, and was chilled. He took hold of the tree to help himself to his feet, but when he was upright and looked again into the mists where the figure had stood the man was gone. And yet the doctor heard a sound which sounded like the hurried scraping of heels upon rocks. Somebody, it seemed, was climbing over the stone wall.

Bingham reflected, and when he looked up he saw a smear in the fog marking the location of the rising sun. In a vague way, and from what he knew of the country, he understood relative directions.

"That man," he told himself, "came from the other road, where Chutter's house stands. If it was delusion on my part, and that was not Chutter, then I shall find Chutter at home, and shall be able to put my finger on a part of my trouble. It means much to me; I will investigate."

But the mists were a long time in clearing, and there were dividing paths, and he lost his way many times. Broad day lighted the landscape and the fog was gone, except for wisps shredded among the hilltop trees, before he saw the roofs of the Chutter homestead. He walked in that direction without haste. And, without taking especial interest in the spectacle, feeling only exasperation at sight of the creature—whether he had appeared in the flesh or as hallucination—he saw the dwarf emerge from the back door of the big house and go bouncing and sidling like a land crab down into a gully which led to a patch of woods.

Bingham approached the buildings from the rear, crossing the field. He went around to the front of the house, but there was no one in sight, and the

big door was closed. He waited patiently a little while, hoping that Zadoc Chutter, were he at home, would see the visitor and come out.

When all remained hushed and he failed to see signs of life at any of the blank windows, he resolved to make an errand of his need of more eggs and milk and dare thus to intrude on the privacy of a man who had made it plain that he did not welcome callers.

He pushed open the gate and entered the yard, and when he was on the porch he put his ear to the big door to listen, hoping to hear sounds which would reveal that Chutter was up and about.

He heard nothing, and after he had waited a few moments he clattered the big knocker. He heard the sound echoing through the house. And within, among the echoes, shrilled a woman's scream.

Bingham did not hesitate. He wrestled at the crystal knob of the old-fashioned door, and the portal squawked open. From the broad hall, rooms opened from left and right, and no doors were closed. In the hall there was clutter of all sorts, even to barrels of rotting apples and withered vegetables strewn about and mixed together. The contents of the rooms were in as great confusion. Trained to observation, he saw that this was no recent upheaval, but was the dusty, musty, careless mix-up of a bachelor's ménage.

In the center of one of the rooms stood the young woman who had come to him in the woods with offer of sympathy. She was stiffly erect, her eyes were wide and staring, and she seemed to have returned to that condition of frozen horror from which the clang of the loud knocker had roused her.

He spoke, threading his way toward her through the snarl of furniture, and at sound of his voice she screamed again and turned and fled. The bang of an outer door sent a racket of noise

shivering through the house, and then the hush came and he felt that he was alone.

He walked on to the place where she had been standing.

There lay a dead man, supine and stark. The face had been battered until it was nearly unrecognizable as a human countenance. But there was a roll of gray whiskers under the chin and the form was gaunt.

Furthermore, the body was clothed in a frock coat such as Bingham had seen flapping around the legs of Zadoc Chutter. The coat lay open, and the ends of papers showed in the inside pocket. Doctor Bingham, shocked and trembling a bit, but preserving his poise as a surgeon who had viewed many ghastly sights, pulled out one of the papers. It was a letter addressed to Zadoc Chutter. He replaced it.

Then here lay Zadoc Chutter, murdered.

He knelt down and made hasty examination. His knowledge in such cases assured him that this man had been dead at least ten hours. He looked at his watch. A little more than two hours before he had seen—according to the evidence of his senses—Zadoc Chutter striding away, coming from the direction of the big house.

He had seen Laura Chutter on the scene of the crime—he had seen the dwarf—the governor—

Bingham swore a good, soulful oath to express his feelings regarding what he had seen.

Then he stooped again and picked up something which he spied on the dead man's breast. It was an empty shell from a rifle.

Doctor Bingham gave such of the body as was exposed more searching scrutiny. Certain marks on the disfigured face interested him. He pulled a small emergency case from his breast pocket and made further examination with probe and magnifying glass.

"The man was killed by a rifle bullet," he said aloud. "It entered through the upper lip, directly under the dividing cartilage of the nostrils. It would be interesting to know why the murderer battered his face so wickedly, for this man fell dead when that bullet struck him. Some men can hate an enemy wickedly enough to do a job of that sort—some men can nerve themselves to do it for a purpose."

He rose from his knees.

The sound of his own voice helped him to steady himself in that awful hush of the empty house.

"It will be a good job for folks to tackle if they like mysteries. As far as I am concerned, the incident is closed."

And Doctor Bingham put the empty shell into his trousers pocket and marched out of the house, choosing for the avenue of retreat the rear door through which the dwarf and the girl had escaped.

Cynically, contemptuously, he dismissed from his mind all thoughts of his own responsibility as a witness.

"A fine showing I would make," he reflected, "testifying under oath that I saw Zadoc Chutter walk away from his own body—and if I cannot separate fact from fiction right now I'll never be able to do it. I have no appetite for a court of law. I'll stand to this: I have seen nothing. I am well out of it."

On his way through the gully, where he saw no one, he comforted himself with the thought that he owed protection to himself first of all. He shuddered at the thought that his pitiful story might be dragged out of him on a witness stand.

"I have troubles enough of my own," he protested to his soul. "Now I am going away from this place and attend to them. I may be a lunatic already. I'll certainly be one in a few days if I stay here. This is not the right kind

of a locality for a man who is fighting what I am fighting."

He saw nobody in the patch of woods. He climbed the hill and secured his bag from the camp. He walked far and by obscure ways, and climbed on board a train at a way station.

"I am well out of it," he kept telling himself.

CHAPTER IV.

TO COMPLETE THE PANEL.

Doctor Alvah Bingham came up to the city in October from—from somewhere.

From just where, he did not bother to remember. Mere locality scratched his callous interest very slightly.

It was some hidden place to which he had fled to battle for the fourth time with the Terrible Thing.

Four combats between bland May and crisp October.

To himself he excused his defeat at Monmouth. He had come away from that horrible place sick of soul and broken of body. He had endured longer and had fought more valiantly in the other trials. This time, the last time, he had struggled longest of all. He was not admitting defeat when he came up to the city. He shrank from too close analysis of his state of mind. He realized that his thoughts were muddled and his brain was weary. He was trying to shake off the languor that was keeping him from his work. His struggles had weakened him. He knew what would put all the zest of life and work back into him, as it had done in the past. He walked the city streets, and his nerves tingled whenever he saw an apothecary's sign. His fierce hankering, freshly awakened, warned him of the peril to which he was exposing himself.

"But I can't stay forever in the woods and fields, hiding like a hermit," he muttered. "I must come back among men. I must work."

But lax nerves and loafing brain refused to coöperate with ambition—balked under the whip of the will.

He walked on aimlessly, knowing what would make him clear, keen, and forceful—and he was afraid of his thoughts.

He dragged himself more slowly before drug-store windows—once he stopped—and then he fairly kicked himself along.

At last he halted, standing at the curb and staring between the colored globes into a shop. He was known in that shop as a physician. He would be served without question or embarrassment.

He began to debate with himself, to fortify his reasoning that this lassitude was only the resting time before sane and normal strength of mind and body would return.

But his stupid sloth of the intellect angered him who had made himself a slave to study and gloried in the servitude. He craved quicker results. He sought for excusing fallacies, preparing for surrender.

In human affairs, the arm of coincidence seems sometimes to be stretched to grotesque lengths.

But in this case, Bingham invited exactly what happened. He was idling on the curb of a busy street. He was neatly dressed, he looked intelligent, and the occasion of the other man was urgent.

This man came hurrying along, escorting two other men.

"Just a minute! Wait!" he commanded when he saw Bingham. He touched the absorbed doctor on the shoulder. "You seem to have plenty of time on your hands, sir. Come along with me, if you please!"

"I do not please!" returned the doctor crisply.

"You'll have to come just the same."

"Who says so?"

"The supreme judicial court of this

State, now in session across the street in the county buildings."

Out of his memory of events came fear and clutched Doctor Bingham.

But this man who had tapped his elbow was smiling.

"I know nothing about the matter, whatever it is," stammered the captive.

"Who are you?"

"I am a deputy sheriff, and if you know nothing about the matter it's so much the better. That kind make the best jurymen. That's been the trouble with the men who have been asked to step down. They knew too much. Come along!"

"I don't understand this thing."

The officer lost his smile and became impatient.

"There's a murder trial on and the special drawing has been exhausted, and the court ordered me to go onto the street and pick up talesmen. I have two, and you're the third. Come on, I say!"

"But you haven't any right——"

"Argue that with the judge. And I have the right! Don't you know law?"

He set firm clutch about the doctor's elbow, and propelled him across the street, and the other men followed. They were rather sullen, but they were obedient.

"This is high-handed outrage!" protested Bingham furiously. At that moment, dragged suddenly away from that solace and stimulant to which he had been reaching furtive hand, his desire was frantic.

"You're lucky you didn't live in England in the old days," declared the chatty officer. "If the jury stayed out too long and the old judge had to beat it to the next assizes, the jury was piled into a cart and taken along, so that it could keep deliberating. And the roads in England were full of bumps, and they didn't have springs on carts in those days."

"A jurymen must be drawn!"

"That's right—but talesmen can be grabbed off the street after a special list has been exhausted."

"And I know nothing about——"

"Tell the judge! Tell the judge!" said the deputy with singsong tone to express indifference.

Bingham and his fellow captives were hustled through ranks of spectators who crowded about the courtroom doors and who evidently had not seemed to be proper material for jurymen.

When the doctor sat down in the jury inclosure, he was too angry to feel any interest in persons in the crowd which packed the room to the doors. He felt the imperious sting of his appetite for that which would put snap into his pulse and vigor into his intellect. He glared up at the impassive face of the judge, who viewed with mild interest this latest addition to his official retinue.

One of the man who entered with Bingham was called forward for examination.

He cupped his palm at his ear, and ejaculated "Hah?" when he was asked for his name.

"Is your hearing defective?" inquired the judge, and was obliged to repeat the question.

"No matter," snapped the court, not waiting for a reply. "He's deaf. Tell him to step down."

The deputy sheriff who had captured him looked surprised.

"That's forty-seven of 'em put through the mill so far," mumbled a man behind Bingham. "Some challenging and picking and choosing for this case, eh?"

The rejected talesman returned to the seat beside the doctor.

"How was that for a slick job?" he asked Bingham in a sly whisper, unable to restrain his desire to brag. "I don't propose to be locked up on a jury for two weeks—not when I can play

act a little. I can hear a nickel drop on a plush sofa fifty feet away!"

"I think I'll try the same story," growled Bingham.

"A looloo is a hand that can be played only once in a session," chuckled the man. "You try it and you'll be found out and locked up for contempt of court!"

The captive who sat on the other side of Bingham was called on. The man took the stand and began to answer questions in sullen fashion, but the doctor paid no attention; he sat staring down into the hands that he held cupped on his knees; he was trying to devise some ruse—to steady his whirling thoughts long enough to plan an explanation that would extricate him from this position. He had just seen a man go free by employing a mere simpleton's trick. But his own intelligence was refusing to help him. He knew what he needed to make him shrewder than all of them—and he longed for the stimulant with all the ardor of helpless torment.

The man on the stand was surly—mumbled his replies, made every statement unwillingly, and corrected himself frequently. Then he volunteered the information that he was an anarchist and did not believe in capital punishment.

The presiding judge showed that his temper had been tried by this prolonged hunt for a suitable panel.

"Mr. Talesman," he cried sharply, "you are trifling with the serious business of this court. If you are hiding behind that stupidity in order to avoid your duty as a citizen, you are a knave. You may step down—stupidity or something worse disqualifies you."

The officer nudged Doctor Bingham.

"You next! Be spy!"

Bingham summoned all his reserve of strength and poise when he walked forward. He knew that he was standing out before the eyes of many per-

sons, and his pride helped him. When he took the stand and steadied his hands on the rail, he made a distinctly favorable impression. His pallor accentuated his quiet dignity.

"There's a young man who looks as if he knows something," the judge whispered to the clerk of the court. "We must complete this panel."

"Your name?" asked the clerk.

"Alvah Bingham."

"Resident of this county?"

"I am."

"Occupation?"

The query was a formal one, necessary for the records, but it came as a bit of a thrust in the pride of Bingham. All these men surveyed him without the least apparent knowledge of his identity. But the young man who stood there and felt natural pride in his own attainments and his discoveries, and in the recognition that had been accorded him by his coworkers, did not take sufficiently into account the fact that he had been hidden in his study, and that in this age men who travel down one lane of endeavor rarely take time to look over the hedge into the other fellow's lane.

"Occupation, please?" repeated the clerk brusquely, misunderstanding the doctor's silence.

"Physician." Bingham decided that this was information enough for the occasion. He began to dislike these domineering ignoramuses.

"Where do you practice?"

"I am not in active practice at present."

"Retired?"

"No, I have been taking a—a rest—a vacation."

"Do you know the prisoner at the bar—are you any relative of his?"

It was necessary for the clerk to point out the man. He was big and red-faced, with the hollow eyes of a frightened hound, and his cheeks were thickly beaded with sweat.

"No, I never saw the man. I do not know him."

"Have you formed any prejudices which would prevent you from rendering a just and true verdict in the case now on trial?"

The doctor continued to gaze into the countenance of the big man in the dock, this other captive whose dumb distress was so apparent.

"I have not the least idea what case is on trial here," replied Bingham tartly.

"Here seems to be an impartial juror all right," mumbled Warren Sanger, attorney general of the State, to his coadjutor, Thornton Wass, county attorney. "And he looks as if he knows something, at that."

The clerk of the court flushed. In his own familiarity with this cause célèbre, he had taken it for granted that every man in the county knew just what they were all talking about in that courtroom that day.

"The case now on trial," explained the clerk, "is State versus Lemuel Arthur Jordan, charged with the murder of Zadoc Chutter, late of the town of Monmouth."

If Bingham's own stress of feelings had not been holding him so under curb at that moment, stringing all his nerves so tensely, he would undoubtedly have betrayed all the apparent guilt of a man who had committed the crime. Indeed, he felt the wild desire rise up in him to shout all he did know about that case.

He swung about on the balls of his feet, clinging to the rail, dizzy for an instant, but his marble-white face did not betray emotion. Many other formal questions were put to him promptly and he answered perfunctorily—and then he began to reply with all the guile and artful acumen he could call to his aid.

His gaze had been drifting about the

courtroom after he swung from survey of the prisoner.

He saw in the section inclosed for witnesses the misshapen bulk of Robert Chutter; the spectacle of the cripple obtruded itself first of all, for that grotesque object was unique in any group of humans.

For another wild moment, Doctor Bingham pondered what would be the result, in his own affairs, if he should tell them all why he could not serve as juror on that case.

But could he tell? What had he really seen? Where had phantom vanished, and when had reality asserted itself?

To what extent, before those men who displayed such indifference in regard to what he was, could he be called on to open his secret? And telling what he knew, at that moment, in order to be honorable, did not mean that he would escape from the hateful place. He would cease to be juror. He would be almost as much a prisoner when held there as a witness. And, in addition, he would be probed to the depths of his soul by those inflexible inquisitors. It meant the ruin of his reputation—the end of his career.

He clutched his secret to himself, and wanted to shriek out his determination to hold it for his own.

Then, looking from the cripple, he saw Laura Chutter.

He was in no state of mind to understand the awful intensity of the stare she was giving him. Whether it was frenzied appeal or protest, he could not analyze. But he did know that she was stricken with emotion that was more cruelly agonizing than his.

Capable of no clear estimate of the situation, harried by questions of lawyers anxious to complete the panel, bitterly jealous of his own secret, fearful of what hers might be, he determined to keep his own counsel and see this thing through. These men had

picked him up on the street despite his protests. He was not called upon to ruin himself to satisfy a point of honor in the law.

There sat a woman who had aroused feelings in him such as he had felt toward no other woman. He realized that in his sorrows since that meeting he had been thinking of her and her sympathy many times. Somehow, she had woven her personality into his struggle with the demon. When he had won a fall, he pondered that this girl who had once looked at him out of brimming eyes would be glad if she could know. When he had failed, he was ashamed because he dared to remember her.

Now he could protect her by keeping quiet.

As a witness, he would be compelled to reveal matters which might incriminate her.

As a jurymen, he would know all the case—could estimate all sides of the mystery—he could help her.

He stopped wondering whether it was right or wrong; he stopped trying to figure whether he was coward or brave man. It was all an unheard-of happening. But the lawyers had ceased to question him further, and he closed his lips tightly.

As best he could, he telegraphed her with his eyes an assurance that what they knew between them was sacred. He felt a little thrill of pleasure, as if some kind of a new, dear intimacy had been established.

The lawyers, who had been silent, pondering, now nodded at each other and at the judge. His honor gave directions to the clerk.

The forty-ninth talesman had been accepted, and there were now twelve men, good and true, according to the legal phrase, who were ready to sit in judgment upon the alleged murderer of Zadoc Chutter.

"Alvah Bingham, take your place! The panel is now complete."

CHAPTER V.

THE CASE OF LEMUEL ARTHUR JORDAN,
ACCUSED OF MURDER.

A shuffling of many feet on the floor, rustling of many human bodies one against the other, and whisperings and mutterings and sighs breaking on the perfect hush of the courtroom followed the declaration that the panel was complete.

"The jury will now retire under escort of the officers, and will organize by the choice of a foreman," ordered the presiding justice. He rose, and the sheriff rapped all to their feet.

"Gentlemen of the jury," proceeded the judge, "I trust that you recognize your solemn duty in the undertaking you are about to perform. Listen carefully to the evidence, and weigh all with the understanding of men. It will be necessary, in the interests of right and justice, that you be closely guarded and kept away from all outside influences while this cause is in hearing. You will be given quarters at a hotel, will have your meals served in private, and will report promptly to the court if any person or persons attempt to have any communication of any sort with you. Mr. Sheriff, declare a recess until one of the clock this afternoon."

"A man might as well be sentenced to a week or so in the county jail as serve on a jury in a murder trial," wailed one of the panel in the ear of Bingham as they marched out of the room. "Condemn the blamed luck, me with apple-picking time right here and my trees all raising fancy fruit, and hired help will manage to tunk every apple. And I told 'em I had made up my mind, and they didn't believe me."

"Got to get a jury some way—hook or crook," said another man. "This

trial is going to be a corker. I'm glad I've got a front seat for it, one dollar sixty-two a day and plenty of good grub at the county's expense."

In Doctor Bingham was burning the fury of a captive, but even more fiery was that inextinguishable and imperious desire for the stimulus which he now needed more acutely. His overtasked nerves were giving way; the reaction had set in. This fool who complained about missing an apple harvest—the idiot who smugly welcomed a job which would slake his curiosity for the morbid! Bingham had to resist an inclination to slap their faces and snarl out his own story. Those men ought to know what true misery was.

The twelve men were locked into the jury room, and for a few moments they stood and looked each other over. It was plain to be seen that no one knew the other. There was the restraint that strangers display. Twelve men, gathered from here and there, and shoved into a room by the strong hand of the law! Herded for one object which was hideous business concerning somebody else's affairs!

"Well, I suppose we may as well get to going here some way or the other," growled the apple man. "When a man commits murder, and all the evidence is against him, I don't see why he doesn't plead guilty and let men stay home and tend to their own business."

There was a moment of silence. Then a tall and bearded man spoke, and there was rebuke in his tone:

"That's a very improper remark to make in a jury room before the evidence has been heard. Jurymen are expressly warned not to discuss the case among themselves. It is not right for one man to create prejudices by hints or remarks. Let each listen to the evidence and judge for himself."

There was a murmur of indorsement.

"I wish that the men who like to sit

on a jury were the only ones who had to sit," said the unmollified apple man.

"I'm sure I am not here by choice," declared the bearded man. He was plainly not a city resident, though his garments were well made and fitted him with some air of smartness. He looked like a solid country merchant. "I am installing a new power plant in my factory and am short of help in my store. My business will suffer. But jury duty cannot be escaped. I have been glad, in some of my civil cases, to see jurymen who would listen patiently to my business affairs and give me justice. Now that I am here, I shall be patient."

"If my memory isn't mistaken," said one of the jurymen, who had been eying the speaker with intentness, "your name was called out as Stewart when you took the stand."

"That's right—Alanson Stewart," confessed the other, with a half smile.

"Then—if I ain't mistaken again—you're Governor Stewart's brother."

"Correct. Anson and Alanson! Our folks combined names so as not to go outside the family." Smiling rather quizzically, he met their combined and interested gaze.

"I voted for your brother," went on the questioner, "and I was glad to have the chance to vote for a man who is self-made and don't put on airs and is one of the plain people." He turned on the other jurymen. "I think it's the sense of this meeting that we're mighty glad to have a governor's brother to sit on the same jury with us. And I think it's further the sense that Alanson Stewart, esquire, serve as foreman. It'll be an honor for us to have him at our head in this case."

"Right you are!" indorsed a hearty voice from the group.

"Then we'll make it unanimous."

The tall man accepted the election with a word of thanks, and the officer on guard without the door was sum-

moned by a knock on the portal and notified that the jury had been organized.

"Then choose your partners and march to dinner," directed the deputy.

They went out of the courthouse, two and two, an officer in front and an officer guarding the rear.

The apple man, who had affixed himself to Doctor Bingham in the first place, caught step with him, and became his companion. Perhaps he thought he had found in this silent young man a sympathizing listener.

"Now, for instance, talking like you and I were about what an outset it was for me to be here at this time of year! You take a Nodhead apple—right name for 'em is Jewett's Fine Red, only not many folks know that—it's crisp, hard fruit and can stand considerable rustling—but a tunk raises the devil with it for show purposes. Hired men don't care a curse whether apples sort as firsts or seconds so long as wages come regular."

Across the street was the drug store where Bingham had been captured. Their marshal headed the procession across the street. The doctor had a long view of the windows. They invited him, promised him relief from his weariness, his fag of soul and brain, his torment. He wondered what he could say to the deputy, what explanation would win indulgence for him.

"I have a severe headache," he called to the officer in front, breaking on his new friend's explanation regarding the proper barreling of the Northern Spy apple. "If I may be permitted to step into the drug store!"

"I'll have to march in the whole jury. You can't be separated, gents. And I ain't sure that I'd be allowed to do even that. Orders are to take you to the hotel and right back to the courtroom. Better tell me what you want and I'll bring it."

"Never mind—it's a special prescrip-

tion," stammered Doctor Bingham. He grew cold at the thought of all those men standing about him in the store and listening.

"Tell it all to the judge. He'll fix it for you. I don't want to take any chances by breaking orders. He's a Turk for seeing that orders are followed out."

The doctor toiled on past the store and sat at table in a private room of the hotel and tried to eat. While his shattered nerves throbbed, his thoughts were busy with the girl he had seen in the courtroom, and he wondered what she had tried to tell him by the expression on her face, where fear and pleading and horror were mingled. He searched for that countenance when he was in the courtroom again. He saw her, and pitied her with all his heart.

"That's the niece of the murdered man," whispered his apple friend, who had chased him sedulously, and now sat close to him. "It has taken two days to impanel this jury, and I've been watching her. Seems to take it pretty bad, though all the newspaper yarns I have read on the case gave it out that Zadoc Chutter hated his relatives just as bad as he hated all the rest of the world. If I had a nephew that looked like that double-twisted hornfoogle sitting side of her, I reckon I'd have good excuse for hating at least one of my relatives."

The judge had not arrived, and the man could whisper without rebuke.

"Perhaps why that girl looks that way is because nobody can find hide or hair of any of old Chutter's money. No, sir, not a cent of it. And it was known that he had a lot—absolutely known while he was alive. Stocks, bonds—all kinds of good securities. Story is that he took it out of safe-deposit vaults a long time before he was killed. Wherever he hid it, he must have done a good job. Between us—seeing that Lord Gull Stewart can't

hear it"—his whisper grew lower—"what do you think—that the man in the dock there knew it was in the house and thought he could kill old Chutter and get away with the stuff and the crime both?"

"I have not read a word about this case," replied Bingham irritably. "I don't know on what grounds of suspicion this prisoner has been held. I think we'd better not talk about the matter."

"If I can't talk about something to take my mind off my apple business, I'll go crazy," whined the other. "Why doesn't that blasted old judge stuff down the rest of his pie and hurry up this trial?"

The judge entered with due pomp, and the complainings of the juror were silenced by the loud voice of the crier: "O yea! O yea! All persons having anything to do before the honorable justice of the supreme judicial court now holden in and for——"

The spectators settled themselves, the jurors drew up to stiff attention, the prisoner in the dock wiped trickling sweat from his purple cheeks, and Bingham turned from his survey of the girl's white face. He could not endure her woeful visage.

County Attorney Wass opened for the State. A thin man, with raspy, nasal tone and a waving finger to express his didactics in the elements of the case. It was his duty to outline merely.

"May it please your honor and gentlemen of the jury: In the case now on trial, wherein the prisoner at the bar, Lemuel Arthur Jordan, is charged with the murder, by force and violence, of Zadoc Chutter, late of Monmouth, in this county, it will be shown to you that the said Chutter came to his death on the seventeenth day of May, or in the evening before that day, by being beaten upon the head and face by some stake, club, or other like weapon of

exact nature unknown. The autopsy showed that such a weapon was employed, and the exact nature of the same, it having been successfully concealed or destroyed by the murderer, is immaterial."

Doctor Bingham shoved his hand slowly and cautiously into his trousers pocket and searched among keys and coins until his finger and thumb closed upon a small object. It was the pocket piece he had carried ever since that May morning. It was the empty rifle shell which he had found on the breast of the dead man.

He did not listen any longer to the nasal whine of the attorney.

"Fools! Fools! Fools!" was his angry mental sneer. "Dragging me in here to listen to a case prepared by fools. Fools—all of them! Without enough of sense and surgeon's science to discover in their autopsy that the man was killed by a rifle bullet. Let them go on! They're fools!"

Beyond the outline of the circumstances surrounding the crime, little was revealed by the county attorney of the inside knowledge possessed by the State regarding the murder of Zadoc Chutter. There was manifest intention to give the lawyers for the defense only meager hints as to the prosecution's plan of attack.

A civil engineer was the first witness called, and he pinned up his sheets of plans of the premises and explained them with wearisome detail. Bingham shut his eyes and listened without interest; he pictured in his inner vision those premises as he knew them, and pondered on many things. Still, everlastingly, he was endeavoring to sift fact from phantasy.

He allowed himself to marvel at the coincidence that had brought him into the case.

Then, in meditating on coincidence, he craned his neck and looked long at the dignified foreman of the jury. The

arm of coincidence makes strange clutches and piles together men and affairs in peculiar fashion. Which was it, coincidence or a mighty secret of the tragedy—this fact that the foreman of the jury was the brother of Governor Anson Stewart, the man who had been wandering secretly in the fields near the scene and near the time of the crime? With finger and thumb pinching the shell, Bingham decided to make fact of that memory: Governor Stewart had been there in the flesh. And yet a politician has many errands of secrecy. How could a governor be interested in the taking-off of a country recluse, or cognizant of the secret?

On the spot of the tragedy, in the actual presence of the dead man, Bingham had seen others who had a more direct interest in the killing of Chutter. He remembered the dwarf's hideous fright in regard to his future and his need of money, and his apprehensions that his uncle's erratic grudge might undo the hopes of the heirs; he remembered also the strength in those arms.

The trained mind, when it is called to its true duty or to the mastery of a problem, can put aside mere emotions in ruthless manner. Doctor Bingham found that the demon was less insistent and that the obsession of the drug store across the street was no longer in the front rank of his thoughts.

When court rose, in the late afternoon, the dry details of the preliminaries having been finished, he gave Laura Chutter a real man's look of encouragement and promise.

The lights were on when the jury marched across the street, and the red and green globes of the pharmacy's windows glowed. But his mind, grappling with its problem of right and wrong and justice, was still able to put aside emotions, even when the controlling emotion was one which enveloped his soul and will.

"Have you still got that headache,

juror?" asked the deputy, reminded by the glowing globes in the windows.

"No," said Doctor Bingham.

CHAPTER VI.

A HANGMAN'S ROPE TWISTED FROM FIBERS OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

The next day, Doctor Alvah Bingham found himself taking more interest in the trial.

His resentment at being forced in as a juror was no longer acute.

He put away the thought that strict honor, from a legal standpoint, forbade him to sit on the case.

"There is often too much law and too little justice in court," Bingham told himself. "The object of all this fuss is to find out who killed old Chutter. While this matter is being heard in court, I can understand some things better than the other eleven men on this panel can; when we get into the jury room, I may be able to protect the innocent."

He had dared to give the girl a furtive smile of greeting that morning; and, though her face did not change, a flick of her eyelids replied to him.

Then he applied himself to the case.

The State started on its effort to prove a motive. Doctor Bingham wondered how much skill would be shown by those whose blundering blindness had failed to discover that the victim had been killed by a rifle ball.

When the doctor who had performed the autopsy was called to the stand, Doctor Bingham leaned forward, his arms on the rail of the jury box. In a moment, he understood that phase of the affair a bit better.

Doctor Burdon—so he gave his name—was plainly a young man who did not disdain his own abilities. He had a snap to his gait, a switch to his movements, a hustle to his utterances, and his whole activity was geared high.

He held his head acock, and his bristle of red pompadour stuck up like a rooster's comb.

"Decides that a thing is so to start with, and then hates to correct himself by any bothersome details," Doctor Bingham told himself, staring the other doctor out of countenance. "That sort of galloper never makes a scientist."

Doctor Burdon made it plain that the fact that Zadoc Chutter was dead was the most important phase in the autopsy part of the case, in his opinion. He was absolutely sure that Chutter was dead and that he did not kill himself, for his face had been battered into practically unrecognizable shape. His well-known fringe of whiskers, his clothes, and other points identified him. Doctor Burdon was not prepared to state positively what sort of weapon had been employed. Thought that a stake or iron bar or some other blunt weapon. Doctor Bingham scowled. He himself distinctly remembered certain cuts, short gashes, depressions as part of the wounds. He wished now that he had taken more particular note.

Suddenly an inspiration regarding those wounds came to him as he listened to the witness; the empty shell in his pocket suggested that inspiration. Had not those wounds been produced by the gun butt of the assailant? Perhaps either fury, or else fear that the victim was not safely dead, had prompted the murderer to use his gun as an apothecary would use a pestle in a mortar. Doctor Bingham filed that inspiration for future use.

However, although the State had fallen down on this autopsy, as performed by a slapdash, cocksure young country doctor, Bingham soon came to feel that the State had known how to burrow for facts in and among the prejudices of a country community; and the State knew how to mass those facts into a complete fabric of circumstantial evidence.

The man in the dock twisted his big hands helplessly, and the sweat of his agony was distilled more copiously.

Witness followed witness, and the evidence piled into more ominous bulk.

The farm of Lemuel Arthur Jordan adjoined the farm of Zadoc Chutter. The line-fence disputes had been constant and acrid for twenty years. Litigation had been long, and all had been nonconclusive, so far as the satisfaction of the litigants had been concerned. One bit of fence, where the ownership of only a few feet of land was disputed, had been torn down and reset, torn up again and reset, first by Chutter and then by Jordan, until it was known in the locality as "The Shuttle." Once the neighborhood doctor had spent two days picking bird shot out of Lemuel Arthur Jordan's back and shoulders. Zadoc Chutter had loaded his gun with minute bits especially for a line-fence occasion, and the wounds were not dangerous, but they were painful because salt had been mixed with the shot. And after that, it was known of all men in Monmouth that Lemuel Arthur Jordan had declared many times that some day he would "get" Zadoc Chutter. It was also known that after the cattle had been turned into the pastures in the May of that year, the line-fence quarrel had broken out with greater virulence than ever. The men had been hard at it in the meadow behind the alders, tongue-lashing each other and declaring vengeance. And after the murder, the footprints of Jordan's brogans had been found in the soft soil near old Zadoc Chutter's big house; there was no mistaking the prints of Jordan's boots, because the heels were half ironed. There were the boots in court. They were passed from hand to hand among the jurymen. Carefully preserved on a shovel, hardened by being baked in an oven, was a section of soil bearing the print of the boot, and that exhibit was also passed to the jury, and the men

were asked to fit the boot itself carefully into the print.

All this, and more of the sort—circumstantial, but damning—came out as witness followed witness.

Despite the inhibition on discussion of the case among themselves, not all of human nature can be squeezed out of men because they happen to be penned together on a jury.

There were the three recesses of each day, there were the long and draggy evenings when they were confined in their suite at the hotel.

The man of apples was a companion whom the taciturnity of the doctor could not hold at bay. He muttered observations under his breath all day long as they sat together in the panel, and in the evening, or on their walks to and from the courthouse, he chatted when the ear of the foreman was at a safe distance. He always had a spare apple in his pocket to give his new friend, for whom he appeared to have conceived a wonderful partiality.

"I'm knowing to considerable of the inside of this case," he confided, on one occasion. "And why in thunder Lem Jordan didn't accept of the chance they gave him is more than I can understand."

"What chance?" inquired Bingham curtly.

"Chance to plead guilty to manslaughter and take a short sentence. He might have done even better than that. Plead self-defense. Old Chutter shot at him once. A little stay in State prison wouldn't hurt him."

"It might if he is innocent."

The apple man stared at his companion.

"You don't believe for one single instant that Jordan didn't kill Chutter, do you?"

The doctor expressed no opinion.

"Why, look at the evidence they have been piling in these last two days! It all fits together like the headboards for

an apple barrel. He killed that man just as sure as robins will peck wind-falls!"

Bingham was silent, but he was confessing his admiration for the art of the lawyers, the logic of their facts, the slow, implacable gripping by the clutch of the evidence.

"By sticking out and trying to bull the thing through, as he's doing—probably by the advice of those young lawyers who have taken his case and want a long trial and notoriety—he is putting his head into the noose instead of getting vindication. Judges may want to be fair and all that, but they ain't falling in love with any man who puts a county to a lot of expense. When he wouldn't come across and own up, they charged him with murder in the first degree, and now he's going to get it in the neck."

"Is that the way you're going to vote, feeling as you do about the man?" demanded Bingham, stung out of his silence.

"What other way is there for us to do? We'll get our instructions from the judge, and we'll have to follow 'em. He had his chance, and he didn't take it."

"If anybody accused me of a murder I didn't commit, I'd fight, too," declared the other jurymen. "There have been too many cases where the law has frightened a man into confessing to something he did not do. If I were innocent, I'd feel better on the gallows—sent there by mistake—than I would coming out of prison after a few years, branded by my own confession."

"For the love of St. Nick, you don't believe that man is innocent, do you?"

Doctor Bingham kept his own counsel.

"I have an idea that Jordan went a little farther than he really intended, and scooped the old chap's bundle after doing him up," stated the persistent chatterer. "Now he proposes to strong

it through. Probably is saying to himself: 'Let the tail go with the hide!' I'm sorry for him. I hate to hang a man, but what are we going to do when it's all laid down for us in the law? I'm hoping that he'll get up all of a sudden and tell the right story, tell where the mazuma is, and throw himself on the mercy of the court."

Then the foreman, who was strolling about the rooms of the hotel suite in order to make sure that his true men and good were obeying instructions, came in that direction, and the gossipier closed his own mouth by munching one of his apples, chunking the fruit with a big knife and spearing the chunks with the tip of the blade.

He irritated Bingham still more in court the next day.

He nudged his seat mate.

"Say, friend, that Chutter girl, over there—that niece of the deceased—must be pretty well acquainted with you."

"She is not," muttered Bingham indignantly, all his soul taking alarm.

"Then she is almighty interested in you. She hardly ever takes her eyes off'm you."

"Say, look here," hissed the other, his sudden rage almost boyish, "you are much too fresh! She may be looking at the faces of this jury, but she certainly is not looking at me in particular."

"Oh, I'm quite a fellow to squint one eye and get a range," said the apple man, unabashed. "I'm sitting right beside you, and I have got the range. She keeps looking at you. And I'm not so sure but what she has been trying to make signals to you."

"You dare to say that again, and I'll choke you right here in the face and eyes of this court!" growled the doctor. His tones were so loud that his honor heard the sound. He scowled reprovingly and ordered the jury to keep their attention on the case. And that, of

course, ended the colloquy between the two, where propinquity, in the case of one, at least, was becoming hateful.

But after a time, when he was sure that the other juryman had his attention fast fixed on a new witness, Bingham dared to steal a glance at the girl. There was appeal in her face; an eager, piteous, nonunderstandable appeal which startled him. Then her lips moved; and their action, although slow, showed unmistakable desire to tell him something.

He shook his head slowly, understanding her danger and trying by this remonstrance to make her understand.

But she continued to move her lips with more careful phrasing of unspoken words, as the dumb communicate by the lip language. She kept looking away from him toward the prisoner in the dock, as if trying to inform him that the message had reference to that unhappy man.

Bingham, fearful that others would behold, turned from her and kept his gaze for the rest of the day resolutely on the lawyers and the witnesses.

The next day, after adding a neatly finished cap piece to the edifice of evidence which had been erected, the attorney general rose and announced, with every appearance of complete satisfaction: "May it please the court, the State here rests its case."

Then the defense began to rear its own structure.

But the young lawyers were not as crafty as the old ones had been, and they seemed to lack material with which to work. Friends and neighbors of Jordan took the stand and did their best in his behalf, with earnest declarations as to his uprightness. But they were obliged to confess, under cross-examination, that no friend can determine what a man will be led to do under stress of anger.

The actual hour and minute when Zadoc Chutter had met his death had

not been capable of actual proof. The young lawyers strove to present some sort of an alibi for their client, but it was far from conclusive.

Even the jurymen, trying to keep all prejudice out of their thoughts, exchanged sly looks with each other which told much.

At recess, in the jury room of the courthouse, one of the jurors was bold enough to voice the unspoken self-questionings of his fellows:

"I hope those lawyers have got something that's really worth while up their sleeve for poor Jordan. Otherwise we——"

"Jurors are not to talk of this case!" warned the foreman.

But restraint for all those days had made the other man testy.

"I'm not talking now as a juror! I'm talking as one man can talk for another's sake if that other man is innocent. The face of that poor, scared, sweating cuss has got onto my nerves. If he didn't do the thing, I hope there's some way going to be provided for him so that he can prove he didn't."

But the jurors, the judge, and the experienced lawyers who had been listening to the case did not for one moment anticipate what recourse the callow young attorneys proposed to employ. For the wise heads were not prepared for any sudden exhibition of lunacy.

In the hush which followed the settling of court after the recess, one of the counsel for the defense rose to give dramatic effect to his command and sprang his surprise:

"Lemuel Arthur Jordan will take the stand."

"Great Scott!" gasped one of the grizzled lawyers in the bar inclosure in the ear of a friend. "Opening up that poor boob to cross-examination by Warren Sanger! It was bad enough before, but now his own counsel are soaping the rope for him."

"It's one of the curses of being

young, senseless, and sensational in the business of the law," growled the friend. "Those two fools will never do such a thing again, but it's too bad to see a man's life pay for a postgraduate law lesson."

The prisoner took the stand—trembling, flushed, shuttling distressed gaze here and there like some tame animal suddenly cornered and forced to stand at bay. But, though his voice was husky with his terror, he replied eagerly to the questions which his counsel asked, and after a time recovered some of the natural poise of a man who wanted to fight for his life as best he could.

The young lawyer paused for some moments before he asked the last question, and a hush fell upon the crowd of listeners:

"Standing here before God and these men who represent the law, can you say that you did not kill Zadoc Chutter?"

"Before God, I did not kill him," squalled the prisoner. "I want to tell

"That's enough!" broke in the lawyer warningly. "The State may take the witness."

Attorney General Sanger, known as a man who could slice a man's soul with the scalpel of cross-examination, rose and walked close to the prisoner and bored him with steady gaze. Pitilessly the prosecutor went at his work. Pitifully the prisoner began to contradict himself, cringing and stammering.

Doctor Bingham took advantage of the fact that all eyes were on the prisoner. He had been wondering more and more just what was Laura Chutter's interest in this case or this man. He glanced in her direction. She made a quick and compelling gesture, lifted a long fur boa from her lap and curved it significantly. She held it in that position.

At first Bingham failed to grasp the meaning. The boa was in a double ser-

pentine curve. She drew back the corners of her mouth and then brought her lips together. Unmistakably she was trying to signal to him a letter of the alphabet. He glanced at the boa and understood. It formed the letter S. He nodded slightly.

Quickly, as furtively as was possible, she doubled the boa and made a semblance of the letter A. The next letter was V. She had more difficulty in the attempt which followed, but he understood in a few minutes. It was E. Then she pointed the end of the neck-piece at the man in the dock.

The doctor knew! "SAVE HIM!" she had signaled.

The next instant, the courtroom rang with the harsh voice of the presiding judge:

"Wait one moment, Mr. Attorney General! Woman—you woman with the boa! Are you trying to communicate with this jury?"

The girl became white as chalk and did not speak.

"Stand up!"

She rose with great effort and stood swaying.

"Answer me! What were you doing?"

"Nothing," she whispered, but the hush in the room was so profound that all heard her.

"Jurors, stand up!"

They obeyed, eleven of them wondering what it was all about.

"Gentlemen of the jury, look on that woman! Has she communicated or tried to communicate with any of you in any manner? Answer in turn, and remember that you are under oath."

"No, your honor," stated the foreman with vigor.

The apple man nudged Bingham.

"It's your fatal beauty," he whispered through the corner of his mouth. "But I ain't going back on a pretty girl." He denied as stoutly as any of

the rest, and Doctor Bingham's tones rang firm in his own "No!"

"Mr. Sheriff, have the woman removed from the courtroom and detained until I can be sure that there has been no improper tampering with this jury."

"You shall not arrest me!" she screamed, when the burly officer approached. It was plain that the tension at which she had been holding herself was snapped suddenly in woman's hysteria. But the deputy put his arm about her and supported her, struggling and sobbing, from the room.

In throngs where human feelings are taut, one emotional brick easily topples others. And the big man in the dock was already at the limit of his endurance.

"You're trying to corner me with questions—just yes and no and yes and no. It ain't man's talk, that ain't!" he bawled. "Let me talk it out. Let me tell——"

"Silence in the court!" roared the judge.

"I ain't going to let you wind your little threads around me!" shouted Jordan, throwing his arms above his head with the gesture of a man breaking bonds. "Yes and no—no and yes—it ain't fair!"

"Officers, make that man sit down!"

"It's man to man in this world, law or no law! I ain't a murderer! I've got a right to stand up and talk man fashion and save myself from being hung. Let me say it right."

"I have done with the witness," stated the attorney general, taking his seat. He felt well satisfied to allow this frantic man to compass his ruin—or, rather, to complete a work already well along.

"Remove the prisoner from the courtroom!" ordered the judge.

But that command was executed only after half a dozen officers were battered and after Jordan had been clubbed

into partial unconsciousness. The maddened farmer fought like a man battling for his life. The courtroom crowd fled and trampled each other underfoot at the doors.

"Declare this court adjourned until to-morrow!" the judge, white-faced, instructed the high sheriff, who had emerged from the conflict with a blackened eye.

And the next day, with all participants soberly subdued after that riot of human passions, the arguments were made, the judge delivered his charge, and the case went to the jury.

The first dusk of evening was settling when, with staves behind them and staves in front of them, the twelve good men and true marched from the courtroom to their chamber to deliberate and pass upon the fate of Lemuel Arthur Jordan.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECRETS OF A JURY ROOM.

Eleven of the jurors seated themselves at the sides of the long table in the jury room, and the foreman took his chair at the head of the table. He did not waste any time.

"Gentlemen, under all the circumstances, I take it for granted that it is the sentiment of this body that whatever ballots we take shall be secret ballots; that is, no man here shall know how the other man votes."

"Sure thing!" declared the apple man of the uncurbed tongue, and he was indorsed by a mumble of voices.

"We will be as informal as possible," said the foreman. "Has any gentleman a suggestion of any sort to make now?"

"I suggest that we take one ballot right now, at the beginning, to see how we line up on the thing," returned the apple man, pulling one of his prized apples from his pocket and polishing it on his coat sleeve. "Maybe we're all

one way, and then there won't be anything more to it. I have hung around this blamed place about as long as I want to."

"We will not be so informal, if you please; that will be improper," chided the foreman, with some acerbity.

"There isn't any harm in taking the ballot, is there?" inquired the other, beginning to pare his apple.

"Not in the least, sir, if the others are agreed. Is it so desired?"

All nodded their heads.

The foreman drew toward him a fresh tablet of legal-size paper. The sheets were bound together with red wax at one end. He produced a big knife, stood up, bore down hard, and sliced off a strip of the sheets.

Then, estimating roughly as he checked with the knife blade little nicks, he junked the strip into twelve cubes, beginning at the unbound end. Doctor Bingham, elbows on the table, watched the operation closely, with the natural instinct of the trained observer who had scrutiny for all things in which he was taking part.

"In order that this and the other ballots may be thoroughly secret, I suggest that we do not write 'yes' and 'no.'" went on Foreman Stewart, "even though we may not be familiar with each other's handwriting. Possibly this plan will serve: Let each man who votes for conviction make a cross; let each man who votes for acquittal make a circle. Each juror better step aside as he makes his mark so that no motion of the hand may be observed. I suggest this only in the interests of making the ballot secret." He juggled his cube of paper in his palm. "Agreeable to all?"

"Perfect checker! Prime notion!" avowed the apple man for the others.

Then went each man to his place beside the walls of the room, marked, and, returning to the table, found the foreman's hat awaiting there as a ballot box.

He tipped the contents into the middle of the table, and all the men stood and leaned over the slips of paper as he turned them right side up and assorted them.

Four of the slips bore the circle; eight of them had the condemnatory cross.

The jurors breathed harder now and looked at each other for some moments in silence.

"This means we must proceed to deliberation upon the evidence," said the foreman, sweeping the slips into a wastebasket. "Suppose we sit down and listen to questions from those of us who have doubts on any points of testimony. In a case on trial, there are some jurors who hear or remember matters which others did not. Probably no one man gets all of it."

"I may as well start the ball rolling," stated the irrepressible apple man. "What I want to ask is whether any juror heard anything in this case that wasn't just circumstantial evidence? Was there anything really clinching outside the circumstantial evidence?"

"On that point we've got what the judge said about the preponderance of evidence," said one of the panel. "If I'm any judge of human language, the old chap seemed to think the evidence mostly prepondered against the prisoner."

"We will discuss the point," suggested the foreman.

At the end of an hour, another ballot was taken.

There were three circles and nine crosses.

Doctor Bingham promptly discovered the identity of the new recruit of the majority.

"I ain't afraid to own to doing anything I think is right," whispered the apple man, taking the doctor aside, ostensibly to give him an apple. "I'm brought over to believe that circumstantial evidence can convict when there

isn't anything in sight except circumstantial evidence."

Deliberation began again, and at nine o'clock a third ballot was taken. Either new light or weariness or hunger or desire to be away and be done with the thing had won a new recruit; there were only two circles on the slips, and the foreman swept the bits of paper into the basket.

"We'd better take another ballot immediately, gentlemen," he said. "The matter seems to be clearing itself."

And it really did seem so. There was only one circle.

"I think we'd better ballot again at once," stated the foreman grimly.

However, for whatever purpose the unknown had come over to the majority, he was back again with the minority on that ballot; there were two circles.

Covertly, but intently, Doctor Bingham was studying the faces of his associates. His own face was a pale mask behind which all emotion was hidden.

At the suggestion of the foreman, more ballots were taken, one after the other, without discussion of the case.

The two circles showed up each time.

"This ring-around-a-rosy business is getting onto my nerves," muttered the apple man. "If two men in this crowd have got any special reasons for letting a murderer go free, I'd like to have some light on the subject."

At ten o'clock, there was a rap on the jury-room door.

A court officer inquired if there was any prospect that the jury would report within a reasonable time. Otherwise his honor desired to adjourn court.

"I see no prospect of a prompt agreement," stated the foreman, without consulting the panel. Some of the men stared at him with surprise, and others scowled. Doctor Bingham's face gave no hint of his thoughts.

The apple man growled about the

uncertainty now of an all-night session. But the officer who brought their suppers in a big hamper informed them, when he set the food in at the door, that the judge had left word that if the jury was ready to report before midnight he would come to the courthouse and receive the verdict.

But at midnight, though there had been half a dozen more ballots, the agreement had not been reached. Twice the men who wanted to get the affair off their hands were encouraged; there was only one circle. But the juror who was thus, so it seemed, trifling with the matter or trying out an experiment came back into line with his adherent.

"We may as well rest," advised the foreman.

Some of the jurors buzzed apart; two and two, in corners. Others tipped their chairs back against the wall and snored frankly. The foreman did not sleep. He remained in his chair at the head of the table and drummed his fingers softly and was deep in thought.

Juror Bingham remained at the table also. He sat with elbows akimbo on the table's edge and etched aimlessly with his thumb nail on the felt cover, his eyes downcast and half closed. The vigil and the strain to which his thoughts had been subjected were having their effect on him. Again imperious longing for the stuff which re-animates his body and fortified his intellect in stress was taking possession of him.

"The others seem inclined to keep on sleeping, sir," observed the foreman, in low tones, at the end of more than an hour of silence.

Doctor Bingham nodded.

"I have been thinking of calling them for another ballot. But perhaps it will amount to nothing."

"Probably not," assented Bingham, shooting one glance at the foreman and returning to his etching on the cover.

"Have you any special reason for

thinking so?" Foreman Stewart's tone betrayed a touch of choler. Bingham had drawled his reply a bit sarcastically.

"No definite reason—as yet."

Then the silence continued.

From the corners of his eyes, the doctor saw that the foreman dozed. After a time, Stewart rested his head on his arms, which were folded on the table, and went to sleep.

Bingham searched with groping feet under the table, found the wastebasket, and hooked it toward him. When it was in reach, he bent himself cautiously, ran his hand deep down, and gathered all he could grasp of the slips.

He curved his palms over them on the table and began to sort them. Certain slips to which he gave close examination he laid at one side, and after he had culled out a little heap he returned the discarded slips to the basket. The slips he had elected to keep he stuffed into his waistcoat pocket. He resumed his etching on the cover.

The apple man awoke, carved an apple, and speared the chunks on the end of his knife and munched. Others came to life, yawning and muttering, rubbing their stiffened arms and legs.

One man broke the silence by calling for another ballot.

It was unchanged—ten to two.

At dawn another ballot—the same.

Then sullenness and impatience took the place of the tolerance which had manifested itself in the jury room. Jurors declared openly against the two who were holding the matter up without taking the majority into their confidence.

"Let's quit this fooling and all stand up here and say how we voted and why we did so," snarled the apple man. But he was not unanimously supported.

At half past nine in the morning, it was a hung jury that sent word to the judge that it had been unable to agree upon a verdict up to that time.

Shortly afterward, the twelve good men and true were summoned forth by command of the presiding judge to attend upon him in the courtroom.

They walked to their places in the jury box, moving with stiff legs. They were unkempt, showing stubble of beard, their faces were haggard, and their eyes were bloodshot. They were tired and cross. They faced the frowning judge and gave him scowl for scowl.

"Mr. Foreman and gentlemen of the jury, I have called you here in order to ascertain whether there is any misunderstanding between you and the court. Are any of you in doubt regarding any point of the law?"

No one answered.

"What say you, Mr. Foreman?"

"I think we all understand the law, your honor."

"It is not my province to pry into the secrets of the jury room, gentlemen. I pondered long with myself before calling you out here. But I am acting in the interests of justice. Are you prepared to state, Mr. Foreman, that this jury cannot agree on a verdict?"

"I can only state, your honor, that it has not agreed up to the present time."

"This case has been thoroughly prepared and well presented. All points have been covered. It has cost the taxpayers of this county a great deal of money. You owe it to yourselves, the people, the court, and the prisoner to end this matter here, either by acquittal or conviction, as the evidence has shown you the truth to be. I am not reprimanding you—not now. I am urging you to agree. I am warning you that this will become a very serious matter if you do not agree." His tones grew harsh. "The people are waiting on you. They demand a verdict. Remember your responsibility. I have had the stenographer prepare from his notes a copy of my charge. You will please

review it when you have returned to your room."

They knew what that charge had suggested and emphasized. So far as a justice could go, he had pointed his finger at Lemuel Jordan as the murderer of Zadoc Chutter.

"Officers, conduct the jury."

They departed, walking stiffly, scowling.

On the march back, Bingham found an opportunity to speak to Foreman Stewart.

"Mr. Foreman," he said, in low tones and without entreaty or apology, "when we are back in the jury room, I am going to make a suggestion which will be open and concern all of us—and I ask that you indorse that suggestion."

"That must be as I see fit," replied the foreman, his eyes narrowing.

"Very well. Then I do not ask it of you—I demand it," said the juror. "If you block me, it's going to be bad for you. That is not a threat, sir; it's a prediction!"

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER THE JURY HAD AGREED.

After the men of the panel were back in their room, a court officer suggested that he bring their breakfasts.

The jurors did not welcome the offer with any show of alacrity. They seemed too sullen and sour to be able to enjoy food.

Then, for the first time in all their sessions, the voice of Bingham was heard. The other jurors surveyed him with some surprise. They had paid little attention to the presence of this taciturn young man whose eyes were always downcast in meditation and whose pale face was a mask and who appeared to hold himself aloof. He had offered no word in their deliberations; in fact, seemed to be only languidly interested in the affair.

"Speaking personally, I don't care to

eat now. And I think we'd better have this matter off our hands before we bother with food."

"How are we going to have it off our hands when there are two hornbeams among us who are sticking out?" demanded the apple man.

"That may be due to error of judgment or honest belief," said Bingham. "We have insisted on secrecy in this room, and for those two men to ask questions would reveal their identity. I have a suggestion to make at this point, gentlemen. I think we all feel that our foreman is a conservative and safe man. He has standing and good judgment. Why not have each juror, going alone, confer with him in the anteroom?"

All eyes were turned on the foreman, and the faces of the men expressed varying emotions. Stewart scratched his fingers in his beard. He looked like a man who wanted to say something and did not know what to say.

"We have had some pretty sharp words from the judge—we have been reminded of our duty. Possibly, if each man can now unburden himself in conference with such a level-headed counselor as our foreman surely is, the whole thing can be straightened out."

"It ought to be straightened blamed sudden, and maybe this is the way to do it," agreed one of the panel. "I'm in favor."

"It's a good plan," approved the apple man. "What say, men?"

They nodded, and no man offered dissenting word.

"So it's up to you, Mr. Foreman," said Bingham firmly. "I further suggest that jurors go into conference in the order in which they were accepted on the panel."

Foreman Stewart bowed assent, but there were grim lines of remonstrance notched into his forehead. He retired to the anteroom, and juror No. 1 trod eagerly behind. It was apparent that this juror had little to confess and no

questions to ask. He came out very soon, and another succeeded him. They remained for varying lengths of time, and none for long.

Then it came the turn of the twelfth juror.

Doctor Bingham was no longer the pale young man without emotions. His eyes sparkled, and there were red spots on his cheeks.

"There are suspicious men waiting outside, and this must be quick and short, sir. Have you any good reason to give me why I should continue to stand with you against the conviction of Jordan?"

"I absolutely deny——"

"Hold on! Your stand isn't open to argument between us." He drew the packet of slips from his waistcoat pocket. "When you chunked that strip you began at the bottom of the sheets, and that left the waxed part in your hands. Every slip here has a red edge, and all have the circle. I changed my vote a few times for experiment; you never changed. I say why should that man be acquitted?"

"I refuse to discuss my stand," said the foreman, trying to get back his poise.

"Personally, I want to see the man go free—and I don't propose to discuss my reasons, either," insisted Bingham. "My reasons are too vague just now. If yours are conclusive, I will stick with you, in spite of court and public."

The foreman turned his eyes from the young man's flaming gaze.

"You are the brother of the governor of this State. Has your stand in this matter anything to do with the fact that the governor was in the vicinity of that crime the very night it was committed?"

Stewart came out of his chair and swore a mighty oath of rage and amazement.

"You lying dog! You intimate——"

"Nothing. But I—I myself—saw your brother that night—talked with your brother——"

"I'll have you in State prison for criminal slander!"

"I don't intimate anything criminal. Of course I don't believe that Governor Stewart had anything to do with the killing of Chutter. But, as the juror who has been standing by you, I ought to be informed why the governor's brother happens to be foreman of this jury and is trying to save the man Jordan."

"I say this is slander," growled the incensed foreman, raising and lowering his fists. "I refuse to discuss——"

"So you have already said. Very well. Our time is up. I simply inform you that on the next ballot I shall vote for conviction."

"And you have reasons for believing the man innocent?"

"I have. But I'd rather have that man standing under the noose than held in jail for another trial after this disagreement. With both of us sparring at each other, there's nothing to be gained by a disagreement. We shall only bring down public anger on ourselves and the prisoner."

"The man will be hanged!" Stewart tugged the limp collar away from his sweating neck.

"Not if he is innocent—and the right men know it, sir. There is such a thing as proving even a condemned man innocent; there's such a thing as the real murderer owning up to save an innocent man, but he'll never own up as long as juries keep disagreeing. And"—Bingham put up his finger—"there's such a thing as a pardon by a governor."

He turned and left the room.

"Quite an argument, hey?" queried the apple man suspiciously, speaking for his fellows.

"I am willing to be wrong for a time when it's a question of standing for a

man's life against circumstantial evidence," said the doctor, facing them fearlessly. "But the foreman"—he bowed to Stewart, who came forth—"has cleared my doubts as, I am sure, he has cleared the mind of the other juror."

"We will ballot, gentlemen," said Foreman Stewart huskily.

The twelve slips bore crosses.

They marched into the courtroom, and the cringing prisoner in the dock was lifted to his feet to face the men who held his fate.

The clerk of the court propounded the question, and Foreman Stewart, his face pale, his hands trembling on the rail, answered: "Guilty!"

The young lawyers were promptly on their feet to file exceptions, but all those in that hushed and crowded court felt sure that Lemuel Jordan, remanded for sentence and staggering away between his guards, had no further chance before the law.

The jury was discharged, and each man took coat and hat from its peg, and drew deep breath of relief and went forth to his own lane of life, to his own pursuits and his own interests.

Alanson Stewart intercepted Doctor Alvah Bingham in the corridor of the courthouse. Stewart had recovered his composure. He was grimly dignified.

"I don't know what manner of man you are, sir, but I suppose you are ready to admit from your own experience that every person has reasons—perfectly innocent and personal reasons—why he doesn't wish to discuss all his acts and motives with strangers?"

"I do," admitted Doctor Bingham, feeling that thrust with poignant realization of its truth.

"That I am the brother of Governor Stewart is not a coincidence."

"Of course not."

"Some crude and ridiculous suspicions of yours seemed to suggest to you

that my being on this jury was a coincidence."

Bingham did not reply.

"Because my brother, with all his interests, is either here or there on certain dates has nothing to do with happenings with which he is not concerned. You understand that, of course?"

"I do."

"Because of what you said to me—although I excuse a lot of folly when a man is under the strain of a murder trial—I shall go to my brother and post him fully. Now what do you propose to do?"

"Nothing," said Doctor Bingham quietly; "only find out whether Lemuel Jordan was the man who killed Zadoc Chutter."

He bowed, and went on his way.

Then another man held him up in the corridor. This man barred the way with a crutch. It was Robert Chutter, whimpering like a puppy.

"I have no time," expostulated Bingham, thrusting the crutch aside. He was impatient. He believed he was to hear more of that abominable supplication in regard to the dwarf's trade with the surgeons. "I can do nothing in the matter. I have told you so."

"But you can help. You've got to help. You're the one that's to blame!"

That druggist's shop across the street! Now that the intensity of his interest in the trial had relaxed, his nerves and body relaxed also. Again the obsession of the drug! He had set himself upon a quest. He needed bodily strength and clearness of intellect. And he was so weary!

"She wants you to come to her," pleaded the dwarf. "She hasn't anybody to help her. She is in jail."

"Who is in jail?"

"My poor sister! Laura! She is going crazy. I saw her behind the bars. The judge put her there because she wouldn't tell things."

Bingham forgot the druggist's shop.

He whirled and hurried back along the corridor. He knew that the court had declared recess, and he knocked on the door of the judge's chamber. He obeyed the call to "Come in!"

His honor was in his big chair, his robe tucked up about his waist, and was enjoying a cigar.

"It's about Miss Chutter," stammered the doctor. "I am told—that you—that she——"

"I was obliged to commit her for contempt of court," replied the judge.

"But she did not mean——"

"I watched her myself, sir. I can believe my own eyes. But she has refused all information—was very obstinate. That case on which you have been sitting was a peculiar and touchy case, Mr. Juror. You seem to show interest in the woman." His eyes narrowed as he peered through his cigar smoke. "Was she communicating with you?"

"She was, your honor."

"What was the nature of the communication?"

Doctor Bingham took a long breath, and lied:

"She was trying to send me a little message, your honor, about—well, it had nothing to do with the case on trial." He managed to muster a smile. "It was—I hope you will pardon me, your honor, if I do not expose our little matter of the heart—but she has been missing me very much."

"Oh, lover's signal, eh?"

"Yes, your honor."

"And didn't know any better than to make love in court, eh?"

"It was innocent thoughtlessness, sir."

"Well," admitted the judge, "some girls are very coy in regard to their love affairs, but I have found few coy enough to spend a night in jail rather than own up." He smiled. "I'm sorry for the error. But she was silly—and a murder trial is no place for love and

jokes. I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Juror, under the circumstances. I'll go with you down into the jail, and she and I will mutually purge ourselves, she of contempt of court and I of contempt of Cupid."

He slipped off his robe, and led the way through the corridors to the jail wing.

She was at the grated door of the women's room, her trembling lips and swollen eyes and pallid face making a pathetic spectacle of utter woe.

Bingham hurried to her in advance of the judge.

"Make believe," he whispered hastily. "Forgive me for what I do—but make believe, just as I'm going to.

"Poor little girl," he said aloud, and she began to sob. "My poor darling! It's all an awful mistake. Here is his honor, the judge, to tell you so. Be brave now. It's all understood."

"I'm very sorry, my dear young lady," said the judge, with kindly dignity. "You should have told me the real facts. If you had said, 'I'm in love with juror No. 12,' I would have scolded a bit, but I would have understood."

"But his honor understands now, my own sweetheart," went on Bingham, desperately resolved to make their affair a matter beyond all question in the mind of the judge. Her first glance at this precipitate lover had amazement in it. Now she stared at him with apprehension. He put his face close to hers at the bars.

"It must be," he whispered. "It's make-believe! But I must get you out." Then he kissed her on the lips to hide the whisper.

The judge signaled to the matron, and she came with her keys and unlocked the door.

"Run along, now, the two of you," advised the judge. "It has been a bad dream. I was hasty. But forgive me."

Bingham put his arm about her when

he led her from the room. She trembled so violently that he was obliged to steady her steps.

"I don't understand," she sobbed when they were alone in the corridor.

"I had to tell him that we are in love. I lied so that you would not be questioned any more. Forgive me for all of it, Miss Chutter. Forget that I kissed you. It was make-believe."

She stole a glance at his troubled face.

"I said your signal meant nothing except a little sign of affection. I will never presume again, you may be sure!"

He looked straight ahead, and missed the glory that shone just then in her tear-wet eyes.

"You came straight and saved me from that awful, dreadful place. I stood there holding to those bars all night long, trying to make myself believe it was a nightmare. You have all my gratitude."

"And your forgiveness for presuming to say that you love me?"

"Yes," she murmured.

"I'll never be as bold again, Miss Chutter. I was desperate; it was an expedient, and now it is forgotten."

And again he missed the strange expression in her eyes, keeping his gaze straight ahead.

The cripple was waiting in the court-house corridor, but Bingham stopped his blubbing delight.

"You sit down on that settee and wait here until we come for you," he commanded sternly. And to the girl he said, as they went on toward the street: "I seem to be asserting all kinds of ownership over you to-day, but I feel that you have something to say to me, and we will go where you can say it. I am hungry. You must be. There is a quiet restaurant across the street."

She looked at him long and implor-

ingly after they were seated in a corner at an isolated table.

"What has happened?" she asked in faint tones. "I have not heard. What did the jury—the verdict——"

He looked her full in the eyes searchingly.

"Guilty!" he blurted.

She fell back in her chair, and closed her eyes. He leaned across the table and patted her hand.

"I did what I could. I understood your message. There were ten"—he hesitated—"there were too many against me. But if this man Jordan is innocent he will not be hanged."

"The verdict—it says he is guilty?"

"Even after a verdict there are ways of saving a man if he is—innocent." He dwelt upon the last word. There was almost query in his tones.

"He did not do that awful thing to Uncle Zadoc." Bingham still leaned close to her, for she spoke in a whisper. He gazed on her full lips, and thrilled when he remembered that kiss.

"Do you know who did do it? You need not be afraid of my caution and judgment in the matter, providing your interests are at stake."

"If you had not seen—but you did see that day," she went on. "You were there!"

"But were you there?" he asked bluntly.

She was frankly astonished by his question.

"There have been times in my life when I have not believed all I have seen," he explained. "That sounds strange, I know, but I can't say any more."

"You saw me with your own eyes."

"I had been hoping that I did not."

"I found him there—where you saw him lying. And—and Robert was there!" She gasped the confession, twisting her hands together. "It is wrong for me to tell you this. It must be wrong. It's my brother! I ought

to be protecting him, just as I always have had to protect him in his folly. But this is such a big thing—such an awful thing! I don't know why I am talking to you about it. But you have seen, and you know, and I have no one else——”

“I hope that's not the only reason why you're talking to me—because you have no one else in whom to confide.” His manner and voice expressed sympathy and invited her confidence. “It's a great deal for me to ask—your absolute trust in me. I'm pretty much of a stranger. But I do wish you'd let me help you. It's a big matter, as you have said—too big for a girl to handle alone. I volunteer in your service. Please take me!”

“It might be right for me to hide it because he is my brother—not right—I don't mean that——”

“It might be human nature; it's first impulse to protect our own. But I have an impulse in this affair also. It's to help you.” His voice trembled, and he realized that he had gone farther than he intended. His face flushed, and he checked himself.

“I am interested in this case for a good many reasons, Miss Chutter,” he went on after a silence. He was crisply businesslike. “I say again you can trust me, stranger though I am.”

“Something seemed to urge me on to talk to you,” she confessed. “I am frightened. I do not know what to do or what is right. And you know about my brother's trouble and his state of mind, and I cannot forget that you offered to help him.”

“Your brother—and pardon me for saying it—is not in a normal mental condition. I remember to some extent my findings when I examined him at the university. The twists in his body have warped his mind. In the case of such persons the law makes allowances, and so does the judgment of the public. So it's best for us to get right

to the heart of the matter, so that we can help him as far as he can be helped. And we must remember that the life of another man is at stake.”

“I am forced to speak—I must have help—after that verdict!” He saw how desperately she was striving to hold her emotions under control, and his unutterable pity went out to her, this little mother of the child that was cased in the hulk of the monster that was her brother. “Even if it's my brother who must pay!”

“It's now between us. We must be absolutely frank with each other. In my profession, we must have facts to build on. Do you know for a positive fact that your brother killed his uncle?”

The question was brutal, and she shivered.

“No.”

“Do you suspect that he did so?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“I took Robert to Uncle Zadoc about the money. We talked with you in the woods, you remember.”

Doctor Bingham did remember, and was glad of the substance he found in the shadow of his recollections.

“You hoped to borrow the money to get Robert free from his bargain with the university. Yes, and then?”

“Uncle Zadoc made us tell him why we wanted the money.”

“Exactly. I can understand how he could do just that.”

“Then he drove us out of his house, and said that he was going to make a will.”

“Thereby intimating to Robert that no will had been made.”

“My uncle didn't stop with an intimation. He said that he had intended to make no will for lawyers to haggle over, but that we would have had his money after his death as his only heirs. But after Robert had owned up, Uncle Zadoc said that he would not have his money spent on jades and jezebels by a

fool, nor would he leave any to me because I was another fool who had always condoned my brother's actions and would let him wheedle the money away from me."

"And about a will?"

"He said that he would make a will the next day and leave the money—every bit of it—to the worst enemy he had—the man he hated most in all the world—the man he was going to smash and ruin as soon as the time was ripe." Some color returned to her cheeks. It seemed to comfort her to share the burden of her secret with this masterful young man, who seemed to understand exactly what he was about. "He said he would curse the money and give it to that man. He said the money might as well go with the rest that this man had stolen from him."

"Did he name the man?"

"Why—yes—he spoke a name, but of course it wasn't the right name. It was only to make fools of us."

"What name did he give?"

The girl drew a deep breath, as if she were about to announce the title of the lord of the universe.

"The governor—Governor Anson Stewart!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEVIOUS TRAIL.

Doctor Bingham put his elbows on the table, and rested his chin on his interlaced fingers, and looked long at the girl under lowered lids.

There was silence between them, for the waiter had come with the food which had been ordered, and was arranging it on the table. After he had finished his service and retired, Bingham did not begin to eat. He still rested his chin on his propped fingers.

"Then you think that the governor was not an enemy of your uncle?"

"I do not know whether Uncle Zadoc knew the governor even. He never talked with us about his affairs. Why,

Doctor Bingham"—her eyes flashed—"he has never even told us whether our father is dead. When we have asked him, he has said it was none of our business."

"Your father must have been much younger than your uncle."

"Why, no! They were twins. But my father was quite well along in years before he married, and my mother died when Robert was born—and then my father had trouble with Uncle Zadoc—so I have been told—and went away somewhere. I do not remember—I was only a tiny girl. We were put out with folks who brought us up."

"And you can't remember how your father looked?"

"No, I was too little when he went away."

"What was the trouble between your father and your uncle?"

"I do not know. I overheard some folks talking once when they did not know I could hear. It was all very vague, and I can't remember very well, but from what I could make out it seemed to me that my uncle was able to drive my father away from home and take all the property he left behind."

There were tears on her cheeks.

With impulse which he could not resist, the young man reached across the table and patted her hand.

"It's too bad," he murmured. "A girl needs her mother, and that poor brother Robert needs a father. And all you have had to lean against is that uncle of yours—and that's like leaning against a granite hitching post. My folks died when I was a little shaver, and I began to earn money running errands and selling papers before I was ten. I got through school and college by working for money just as long as I could stand up, and then I'd sit down and study when other folks were asleep."

"And you had no one to help you?"

she inquired, full of sympathy, returning his own compassion with interest.

Deep creases settled about his mouth, and his eyes grew hard.

"I can't talk about the friend who offered help when my eyes seemed burned out and my brain was as heavy as lead. I can only say that it—that he—turned on me and kicked me into damnation."

He shifted his eyes from hers in some confusion, and began to serve their food.

"We'd better eat before we talk any more. And let's forget all our troubles for a little while."

For an hour they chatted, and some of the wistful pathos and anxious woe cleared from her face. She was able even to venture a little jest on her record as a jailbird, though fears blurred her eyes.

When the meal was through, he suggested a walk in the park, and they went forth into the crisp air and strolled along unfrequented paths where the wind swirled leaves about their feet and swept the cobwebs of confinement from their brains.

"Now," he said at last, "I must cut a little more with that dreadful scalpel of questioning, but it will soon be over, and then we'll know where we stand, and we'll feel better."

He lifted her hand, and drew it into the hook of his arm, and they walked slowly.

"Remember," he said, "that Jordan has been convicted by circumstantial evidence. You may have suspected your brother on account of mere circumstances. And of course you feel that after your uncle declared that he would make his will, Robert had a motive."

"He made terrible threats as we walked away from Uncle Zadoc's house. I could not quiet him or control him. I have always been able to do it before. He has always been like a child in his

anger—he would storm a moment and then cry and be sorry. But I was afraid of him that day. I could not bring him to his senses. He was like an insane man. He growled and snarled. He stopped and beat the arm of his crutch down into the ground, and he said"—she choked—"he said he would kill Uncle Zadoc before he had any chance to make a will. He beat down his crutch with that awful look on his face until I was frightened. You know how strong he is in the arms."

Doctor Bingham did remember those grotesquely powerful arms which served the dwarf as his real legs; he also remembered those hideous notches in the face of the dead man, and, shutting his eyes to assist memory, he tried to picture those wounds in his vision.

"He would not stay at home that evening. He said he was going back to have another talk with Uncle Zadoc. I tried to make him stay with me, and when I started to follow him he made me afraid. He threatened me with his crutch. I ought to have called somebody in. But I have always protected and shielded my brother as much as I could. He seemed to be calmer after a time, and I made him promise he would not offer to harm Uncle Zadoc. He has always done just as he has promised me. He said he would go and beg for the money. Like a fool, I gave up and let him go. I could not make myself believe that my brother would commit a crime."

"It too often happens that dangerous lunatics are tolerated too long outside a hospital because their families have become accustomed to them and don't understand the danger," said the doctor, trying to console her. "We make allowances for those who are near to us. He went, eh?"

"Yes, and I sat up all night and waited. I did not dare to go there in the night. A girl's silly fear kept

me from doing my duty—I realize it now. And I dreaded to expose our family affairs by calling on the neighbors. I hoped nothing would happen. I knew that Robert was always afraid of his uncle.”

“But in the morning you did go.”

“Yes, and I found Robert hunting and hunting the house over. I watched him through the window. And when I did not see my uncle, I went in—and I found him.”

He waited patiently until she had recovered from her emotion.

“Did you ask your brother what he was doing?”

“He told me that he had found my uncle just as I saw him. He said he was hunting for money. He said that if he did not find it somebody else would come and take it away, and it was all his and mine, and that other folks were thieves.”

“You asked Robert whether he had harmed his uncle?”

“He swore over and over again that he had found him dead. Robert said that he had walked in the road and in the field until late—very late—trying to get up enough courage to go to Uncle Zadoc. And he said there were men about the house. He did not dare to go close enough to see who they were. And when all was quiet and he saw that a lamp was still burning, he went in at the back door. But”—the girl choked again—“I did not believe my brother, Doctor Bingham. He had been in that awful state of mind. He had threatened. He had set his mind for years on having our uncle’s money. I told him that he had killed Uncle Zadoc and he began to cry, and ran away. Then you found me.”

“You did not believe him, eh?”

“Men never came to my uncle’s house in the night to see him. He never sat up till midnight. And if Robert had found him lying there dead, he

would have hurried away and given the alarm.”

“Perhaps not,” observed Bingham. “Your brother’s mind was wholly on money and had been centered on money for a long time. Does he still persist in his story?”

“He says that he did not kill Uncle Zadoc. But he has told falsehoods about other things he says he saw that evening. I know they must be falsehoods. I know my uncle did not entertain men and sit up late. It’s terrible, Doctor Bingham, to believe it about my brother—but he was insane. Another thing he told me proves that he was insane—or else he didn’t know where to stop in his falsehoods.”

“Well?” prompted the doctor, when the girl hesitated.

“It’s too ridiculous to tell you—it’s just a made-up story.”

“But we’d better have all the stories. I have often found in my experiments that some of the biggest things are tumbled on by accident. It’s like fumbling for the secret button which opens the big door.”

“Robert said that he went into the house and sat down very quietly and waited for Uncle Zadoc to appear. He said he was dreadfully afraid of making Uncle Zadoc angry and only wanted to beg of him to help and forgive, and so he sat there a long, long time. He doesn’t know how long. He says it must have been almost morning—perhaps it was morning. The light was burning, and he knew that uncle wouldn’t go to sleep and leave a light burning—so he looked for him to appear almost any time, and he did not dare to call for him. He says that uncle came downstairs with a big satchel in his hand and walked out of the house before he could get up courage to speak to him. And then he waited, and after he had begun to hunt for money he found Uncle Zadoc dead on the floor among the barrels. I have

told you all—but it must be a wicked, foolish falsehood.”

“When the mind is much exercised, the senses convey strange impressions,” said Doctor Bingham, remembering that Zadoc Chutter had pushed him off a stool in the sugar camp.

“But Robert must have dropped asleep. He keeps up his lie to me by insisting that he was wide awake.”

“Fact and phantasy—it’s hard to separate them sometimes,” remarked the doctor, with the air of a man intent on his thoughts, and talking on for politeness’ sake. He seemed to be so thoroughly absorbed that she respected his mood, and was silent.

“Tell me,” he urged; “your brother has had queer notions about a good many matters, hasn’t he?”

“He is very strange, Doctor Bingham.”

“Rather timid and childish when he isn’t having one of those fits of anger?”

“Why, he is worse than a baby about some things. That’s why I have found it so hard to suspect that he harmed Uncle Zadoc. I have seen him faint away when a gun was fired close to him.”

“I was getting at something like that,” put in the doctor. He slipped the hand of his disengaged arm into his trousers pocket and fingered the empty shell. “Has a horror of guns, has he?”

“That is one of his especial notions. I happened to speak of it first because he has always shown a peculiar fear of a gun. He would as soon pick up a snake as handle a gun.”

Bingham walked on for some time without speaking. The path took them around the park toward the courthouse.

“This has been a profitable conference, Miss Chutter,” he said. “And all the points of it we’ll keep strictly between ourselves. Give me your hand

on it.” She clasped his fingers with firm pressure.

But her face showed her doubts.

“Will it be right to keep it secret—about my brother, Doctor Bingham—if what I know will set that other man free?”

“What is it you really know?” he asked, with emphasis on the last word, and smiling down on her. “Remember that we are talking about evidence and not about fears and suspicions. We’ll quiet our consciences in this matter for the present by telling ourselves that it’s enough to have one man damned by circumstantial evidence. One at a time, Miss Chutter!”

“Do you think Lemuel Jordan did it?”

“When that man broke the rules of court as he did I think I was in a mental condition where I could analyze human emotions better than the others in that courtroom. They had allowed themselves to be tied down by the details of that case during those tedious days. The man talked and acted as if he were innocent. I believe he is.”

“Then Robert must have done it,” she said brokenly.

“I want you to keep your faith in your brother’s innocence for a time,” he entreated earnestly. “I have special reasons for asking you to do that. Be brave. I tell you honestly that I do not believe that you are helping him to conceal a crime.”

He paused at the courthouse steps.

“You are going home now—your brother and you, I suppose?”

“Yes, this afternoon.”

“Impress upon him that he must open his mouth to nobody in regard to this case. Frighten him, if necessary.”

“He is already so frightened that he refuses to talk even with me.”

“I am not an enthusiast in that matter of promises, Miss Chutter. My training has made me cautious until the

final result is reached. I can only tell you now that I have taken this case up with the resolve to use all my time, strength, and mind in"—he hesitated—"in your service."

She flushed.

"That sounds a bit bold," he apologized. "I hardly have the right to take any of your affairs into my hands. But you know it's human nature to be inspired more fervently by a person than by a principle."

"I beg of you to take my affairs into your hands," she pleaded wistfully. "I am only a country girl. I have no one else to help me—no one to confide in. I shall be thinking of you every minute of the day and praying for you. If I knew more, I could help you."

"You can help—more than you realize," he returned. "I'll tell you about that part when—when the time comes."

He raised his hat, and left her hastily.

He walked directly across the street straight at the drug-store windows.

When he was within arm's reach of them, he swung on his heels sharply to the right-about, and went on his way, his shoulders square and his chin up.

"Yes, you are helping more than you realize," he muttered, and the memory of her pleading face was before him and the touch of her lips on his seemed still to lie warmly there.

"I seem to be working up out of the Hollow of Hell by a route different from what I had planned on," he reflected. "But I reckon God knows His own business best!"

CHAPTER X.

A FEW ACID TESTS.

Doctor Alvah Bingham went down into the town of Monmouth as a scientist might go to his toil in his laboratory.

For two days after the end of the trial he remained in the city, penned

in a hotel room, concentrating all the force of his mentality on the case of Zadoc Chutter.

He was wondering whether, from what he knew to be actual, what he feared was phantasy, what he guessed was probable, and what he had heard during the trial of Lemuel Jordan, he might be able to solve the mystery by a series of deductions. Then he gave up the effort in disgust. He realized that his training in the laboratory had led him to depend upon what he could touch and see. As a scientist, he went straight to where his material lay.

He slipped into Monmouth by a "back door," so to speak. A countryman hauled him and his modest store of provisions from a railroad station up the line to a place on the highway not far from the sugar camp on the maple ridge.

Bingham took possession of the camp without bothering his head as to his rights in the matter. He reflected somewhat whimsically that his lease of the place had been indefinite and that he would pay when his landlord came and presented a bill.

He made several trips from the highway to the camp, carrying his belongings on his back. When he was well settled, he stood in the door of his shelter and sniffed the crisp air and gazed out over the rolling country and on the scattered roofs which could be seen through the leafless trees.

In the distance was a bare little building above which a flag fluttered, and in the yard before the building tiny figures bobbed and darted about. He decided that this must be Laura Chutter's school, and while he looked down on it, with strange emotion stirring him, he heard in the hush the tinkle of a little bell, and the human dots hurried out of sight into the building like ants into a crevice. He knew her hand had rung the bell, and he felt a comfortable sense of neighborliness.

Then he was conscious of the chick-chock of a woodchopper's ax in the valley depths below, and he strolled in that direction in order to bargain with the chopper for a new supply of firewood.

The man straightened and stroked sweat from his forehead with his thumb, and agreed to furnish the wood.

"I'll fit you up some from that four-foot length corded over yonder. It's all dry. I'm keeping on chopping here according to my old permit," he gossiped, "but I ain't just sure of my rights since Zadoc Chutter was killed. I'm waiting for the heirs to come along and collect, but the heirs don't seem to know just where they stand."

"I hired the sugar camp of Chutter, and I'm waiting to pay rent to somebody," said the doctor. "I don't know just where *I* stand, either."

"Saw you around here in the spring," stated the chopper. "Heard you was here for your health. I must say you're looking better. Down now for partridge shooting, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"You'd better hang right onto the camp. It's going to be some time before that estate is settled. They can't find any of old Zadoc's personal property. They can't find any of his papers. They're hunting for a will."

"Do folks think he left one?"

The man drove his ax into a log, and began to fill his pipe, glad of an excuse to loaf a moment.

"There may be one way of finding out," he said, cocking his eye at Bingham with the canny air of the rural humorist.

"How?"

"Somebody that's got spunk and gumption enough might go and ask Zadoc's ghost. It's been haunting the house, more or less, ever since they lugged Zadoc off to the graveyard and locked up the doors of the old place."

"What's the joke?" asked Bingham curtly.

"I don't know," returned the man, with serenity. "May be a real ghost instead of a joke for all I know. But it seems to be pretty generally agreed on around here that every now and then something queer happens in the old house. Dim light moving around and flashing. Once a fellow who was pretty well tea-ed up with hard cider, and was coming home from a dance, had courage to go close up to the house, and he heard noises."

"He may have heard them in his own head if he was drunk," remarked the doctor, with disgust.

"Oh, he wasn't drunk. He was only tea-ed up just enough to have some courage. But I myself have seen a light in the house—just a flicker of light. And I don't drink!"

"Thieves probably."

"Don't know anything about it, mister. But let me tell you they ain't thieves from these parts. There ain't a man in this section of the county who would dare to go into that house after dark."

Bingham wondered, squinting his eyes in thought, whether Robert Chutter's desperation were sufficient to drive him to prosecute search in the nighttime.

"You are sure you saw the light?"

"My eyes are mighty good, mister. I saw the light."

Doctor Bingham looked the man over, and decided to docket that declaration as dependable. Greed or a deeper motive was driving some person to frequent the Chutter premises.

But he did not allow himself to display interest.

He paid the man the price agreed upon for the wood, explaining that he might be away hunting for partridges when the fuel was delivered.

"By the way," said the chopper, when Bingham turned to leave, "seeing that

you were here in the spring—and I don't remember any other stranger being here—maybe you dropped this out of your pocket. I've been carrying it around for some time, hoping to find an owner."

It was the little black case. The doctor stared at it, but did not offer to take it. He looked over the man's head and saw the fluttering flag through the leafless trees.

"It is not mine," he declared, and the force of his denial seemed to astonish the chopper.

"I can't figure out what kind of a doofangle it is," said the man. "Do you know?"

"Open it!" directed the doctor. "No, don't give it to me. Open it where you stand."

He looked at the syringe and the vials, and scowled.

"That's a dangerous and wicked thing, sir. You'd better destroy it."

The man laid it down on the log.

"It's poison—it's worse than that. It will bring a lot of harm to the owner, if you should ever find him. Smash your ax on it!"

It was stern command, and the man obeyed. Chips of glass flew in all directions. Then the doctor strode away.

"You are helping," he said aloud. "God bless you—little girl!"

He went back to his camp and took a nap, preparing himself for a vigil that night.

But although he scouted until dawn in the vicinity of the Chutter mansion, searching the windows with his gaze, he saw nothing except blank darkness. He stole close to the house and put his ear against the door, but he heard nothing.

The next day, he walked down to the Chutter house quite frankly and openly. It was plain that the place had not ceased to be of interest to the public. Several men, whose wagons stood in

the highway, were strolling about the premises on a tour of inspection.

"This is where the old miser was murdered," Doctor Bingham was informed. "You may have heard of the case."

"I have heard of it."

"I reckon, before his last gasp, Lem Jordan will tell where he hid the property," observed one of the group. "He certainly can't take it with him, and he's an old bach with nobody to hand it over to."

"Lem Jordan didn't kill Zade Chutter for what money he could grab," insisted another man. "Furthermore, if there is any money on these premises, it's still here and will be till this old house is broken up and sifted through a sieve. Chutter knew how to hide things when he hid 'em."

Bingham did not stop to listen to the argument. He took the liberty of an ordinary sight-seer, and began to inspect the premises. He went from window to window, and from door to door. The law may seal a house with tags and strips, but nature provides seals even more effectual for a building which is untenanted. In the corners of the window sashes the doctor found cocoons spanning the space between window case and sash. Cobwebs sprinkled with dead and dry flies stretched across the corners of the doors and proved that the portals of the mansion had not been swung for a long time. But at the rear of the house there was one window where the cocoons had been violated. He peered through the dusty glass, and observed that the catch of the window was properly fastened. But he noted also that the pane in the sash above the catch had no putty to secure it; the putty had been scraped out and pegs held the glass.

So this must be the avenue for the unknown who came by stealth to grope o' night in the mess and clutter of the abandoned mansion!

Then Doctor Bingham realized, from his growing sense of relief, that he had been guilty of infraction of one of the cardinal rules of impartial investigation: he had been suspecting that Robert Chutter was the night prowler. But the dwarf, on account of his short stature, naturally would have selected a pane of glass under the window catch instead of over it. He would have driven his crutches deep into the ground in his efforts to climb into the window. There were no marks in the soil. To be sure, there was the possibility that he might have rested his supports on strips of board. However, the doctor had determined to take facts first of all and to theorize when all facts failed to prove.

He heard the rattle of wagon wheels, and looked around the corner of the house. The men were going away.

When all was quiet, and he had assured himself that no persons were walking in the fields in view, he pulled out the pegs, removed the pane of glass, slipped the catch, and climbed in at the window.

He went from room to room, picking his way through piles of upended furniture, and between barrels of rotting vegetables. It was the same interior which he had seen on that morning in May. Therefore, the confusion of the house's contents conveyed no hints of value to him. He ascended the broad stairway of the front hall, and explored the upper rooms. There was less disarrangement in this part of the house, and objects stood forth more distinctly. Below, he would have passed the object he saw on the floor, leaving it unheeded in the rest of the clutter. It was a small parcel, loosely wrapped in a newspaper. He picked it up. It contained a piece of withered beef and two slices of bread dried into a state of brittleness.

The man whom he had recognized as Zadoc Chutter, and who had declared

that he was not Zadoc Chutter, had brought beef and bread to the camp on the ridge and had carried the food away with him.

Doctor Bingham examined the paper. It was a weekly news sheet published in a small town in upper New York State.

Its date of issue was a day in mid-May of that year, and a pink mailing slip on its edge bore the name, "Zebulon Chutter."

Doctor Bingham smoothed and folded the newspaper and stuffed it into his pocket, his mind busy. First of all, he felt more of that comforting relief which had been bolstering his courage of late. His mind was clearing of its past doubts. Day by day matters which he had been considering as phantasy were solidifying into facts. His senses during that dreadful period had not played him as false as he had feared. The man who had declared that he was not Zadoc Chutter had carried a newspaper addressed to Zebulon Chutter. Was not this man the twin brother of the man who had been killed? Had not this brother come back to demand reparation or to seek belated vengeance? Was this the secret of the Chutter mystery?

Bingham was obliged to check his racing theories. He found himself leaping to the conclusion that the brother of Laura Chutter was innocent and that the father of the girl had committed the crime. And he who had set himself to the task of saving her family name and her peace of mind found himself trembling at thought that his investigation might bring to her still greater grief. The act of an insane brother might be condoned; the crime of fratricide by a man who had come out of the shadows to have revenge was not to be glossed.

"Hold on!" he told himself. "It isn't time yet for the acid test. This is only one more fact."

Again he informed himself that he accepted as a fact the statement of the woodchopper in regard to the mysterious light. The window with the broken cocoon seals corroborated the statement. The fact that only one window had been used indicated that only one party had an interest in what the Chutter house might contain. It might be the sordid interest of loot; it probably was, he reflected. But he determined to investigate that interest and to ascertain the identity of the prowler.

In one of the remote rooms of the upper story there was an old-fashioned bed with a valance that hung to the floor. From another bed, Bingham pulled a husk mattress and a pillow, and he found a tattered quilt in a closet. He pushed these under the big bed, and dropped the valance. He had provided himself with a hiding place.

Then he left the house, replaced the glass with care, and walked away, glad to be out of the musty oppression of the place.

He did not return to his camp. It occurred to him that by making a recluse of himself he might stir suspicion in the little town. The woodchopper would probably report that there was a sportsman in the sugar camp. Besides, he told himself, he now had urgent business at the post office; but in the end, being a scientist and a searcher after truth, he owned up to his heart that he longed to see and talk with Laura Chutter. He longed for her companionship and the support her presence gave him. He felt his need of her with more intensity ever since he had seen the glass scattering under the blow from the woodchopper's ax. He had seen from his aerie the narrow ribbon of highway winding through the alders past her little schoolhouse. He took that road and hurried along, noting the time by his watch and wondering whether he would arrive before she dismissed her school for the afternoon.

He was in time.

The children came scampering out, and then halted and stood, with fingers in their mouths, speculating with urchins' wonder on the identity of this tall young man who was waiting in the yard. And she came forth last of all and locked the door.

She flushed deeply, and turned her back on the children to hide her confusion when he came to her with his hat in his hand.

"I am here—on the job," he explained in low tones. "Am I causing any trouble for you by coming here to the school?"

"No, Doctor Bingham."

"May I walk along with you?"

She nodded, and smiled up at him.

They were attended by a little retinue of inquisitive children, and were obliged to talk commonplaces and were glad that it was so. For by that means they drifted into easier intimacy than they had enjoyed in the past. And the children, finding nothing of interest in this chat, dropped away one by one.

"I must walk as far as the post office," he informed her. "I have a letter to send off. I don't know much about the town—the village part. Is the office far from here?"

"Only a mile—it's my usual walk after school. I'll be your guide."

They continued to talk without reference to the tragedy until they arrived in the outskirts of the village.

Then he asked her if her brother was obeying her commands.

"Absolutely. He has not had any more fits of rage, and he stays at home very closely."

"He does not go out in the evening?"

"Never."

"You would know, of course?"

"Oh, yes! He cannot move about the house without making a clatter."

"He has revealed nothing that might help us?"

"We have not talked about it. I am ashamed—I am afraid."

"I am going to ask a special favor of you—but not just now. If you grant the favor, I may be able to relieve your mind still further in regard to your brother." They were in the village. "I have a letter to write, and I'll step into the tavern. Will you excuse me, and can you occupy yourself until I can join you?"

"I am to try on my new fall hat, Doctor Bingham," she replied, with another of those smiles which warmed his heart. "A woman cannot ask for more perfect entertainment."

His letter was to the postmaster of the small town in New York. He asked if one Zebulon Chutter had lived in the place, when and how long he had lived there, if he was still there and had been seen by the postmaster at a recent date. He also asked for a little description of the man. He explained that it was not idle curiosity which led him to ask these questions, but that the matter involved important interests.

He posted the letter, and waited in front of the millinery store until the girl came out.

"I am wearing it," she cried, merriment in her face and voice, "in your honor."

Doctor Bingham, to his certain knowledge, had never noticed a woman's hat before in all his life. But he found himself expressing his opinion of the beauty of that hat with a profundity that astonished him. And yet, while he talked about the hat, he kept his eyes on the girl's face, and whether her flush indicated embarrassment or pleasure would have been difficult to determine. He may have been a bit embarrassed himself by his volubility, for he suddenly became silent as he walked on beside her.

When he spoke again, he changed the subject in a fashion which rather startled her.

"By the way, when you were talking about your father the other day, you did not tell me his given name."

"It is—perhaps I should say it was," she corrected herself wistfully, "Zebulon."

CHAPTER XI.

THE MAN WHO CAME IN THE NIGHT.

As a miser counts his coins so did Bingham linger over those golden moments he was spending in the company of the girl.

His sensations were new to him. During his life until then he had put woman out of his thoughts. Rather, his thoughts had been so wholly concentrated on his work, and work had proved to be such a jealous mistress, that he had given himself up to it until it had been succeeded by an even more importunate intimate—the siren of the black case luring him on to damnation.

The beauty of this girl attracted him; her frank innocence made her companionship delightful. But under all there was a deeper reason for his hungry desire to be near her; he felt it more and more when they were together. Her long guardianship over her brother had developed in her a nature which understood weakness and tenderly ministered to it. Bingham felt that she was nursing his sense of self-reliance with womanly understanding. He was stronger when he was with her.

He walked slowly on their return from the village. She suited her pace to his, and though the dusk wrapped them, and the stars came out, she showed no inclination to hasten. And once more they put away from them all talk about the tragedy. He opened his heart to her in regard to his ambition, and she made known her sympathy and interest by that wonderful silence in which a true woman tells so much without words.

He was talking eagerly when they came in front of a little cottage.

"It's my home," she said.

"I'm sorry!" he blurted. "Oh, no! I don't mean that, of course. I mean that I'm sorry because I must now walk on—alone."

She hesitated a moment.

"It's a little unconventional, this invitation, Doctor Bingham. But will you not come in and have supper with my brother and myself? I am my own housekeeper, and I am not proud of myself as a cook. But I know you will overlook my faults."

"I am a housekeeper, too, up in that sugar camp. And I make poor shifts at it. You are rescuing me from a supper of crackers and cheese. I certainly will come in. I am so grateful that I feel like crawling in on my knees."

The dwarf was in a corner of the kitchen, busy with his soldering kit. In the light of his blow lamp, he resembled an artist's conception of a gnome.

"Have you come to tell me that it's all arranged?" he squeaked. "Will they let me off? How much——"

"Robert!" cried the girl in sharp command. Her brother blinked and was silent, and lowered his eyes. "Doctor Bingham is here as our guest at supper. Not another word! Understand? Not another word on that subject!"

Her mastery over him was evident. He went on with his work.

"I'll establish you in state in the sitting room," she told the doctor. "You can amuse yourself with a book."

But Bingham was sure in his own mind that he could amuse himself in better fashion.

"I know you'll not be so cruel as to put me away all alone," he pleaded. "Remember, I'm a housekeeper, too. I don't know any of the tricks yet. I'll stay out from under foot. But let me sit here in the kitchen just like one of the family. Please do!"

She consented with an indulgent, though reproachful, smile. She came out from her room presently, a crisply laundered tire enveloping her from rounded chin to tip of her toes. She stirred the fire, and went briskly about her work.

Women make varied appeals to men—from the coquette in the ballroom to the water nymph on the beach—but a pretty woman preparing food for a hungry man appeals to a primal instinct that has lurked in the masculine breast ever since Cain brought home prey with the dent of a stone hatchet in its skull.

Bingham watched her movements with a sense of cozy and comfortable delight. The fire painted her cheeks with more alluring colors. The big tire made her seem younger. She hastened about her work with demure disregard of this staring supper guest.

"Pardon me if I watch you very closely," he apologized, rising and standing close to her when she beat eggs in a bowl and added flour. "I'm trying to pick up a few good ideas. What are you making?"

"Pop-overs."

"How did you guess that I am passionately addicted to pop-overs?"

"I'm afraid I wasn't thinking of you," she replied, attending strictly to her task. "Pop-overs take only twenty minutes in a hot oven, and it is getting late."

As he stood there, he had been fighting against almost irresistible desire to put his arms about her and kiss the red lips which had once suffered his caress. It was not the impulse of mere passion. He felt a sane, manly, honest longing to tell her that he loved her—loved her for herself and because she was helping him to win that battle which had seemed so hopelessly against him until she had intervened. Her matter-of-fact tone brought him to his senses. Robert or no Robert, he had been near to clasping her in his arms!

When supper was spread, Bingham lingered over each dish she had prepared. The dwarf scowled at this dawdling, gulped his food, "sooped" his tea, finished his supper, and sat upright, resigning himself to wait.

"Robert, if you do not care to remain longer at table, we will excuse you—I'm sure Doctor Bingham will."

"Certainly!" agreed the doctor heartily. He repressed an inclination to add, "With pleasure!"

The cripple took his canes, and scrambled down from his chair.

"If there are no objections, I'll go to bed," he suggested. "I've got all those pans to deliver in the morning."

He retired into a room off the kitchen and slammed the door.

Doctor Bingham, in spite of her protests, prevailed in his determination to wipe the dishes, and did so in a way to earn her praise. This privilege of working with her added to his deep content. And when all was tidied she put off her big apron, and they continued their chat in the sitting room. He prolonged their talk, knowing that he ought to go, and dreading the parting. He knew just how lonely would be that walk back to the camp. But he nerved himself.

"I must go," he said. "I had no right to presume so long upon your time."

"You have a long walk," she returned, "and I suppose you must be starting. But before you go, Doctor Bingham—you spoke about a favor you were to ask. A woman is always curious. Can you tell me to-night?" She added, with a laugh: "Otherwise, I might lie awake wondering what you meant."

Her question chilled him. His face became grave. It was capping that evening of comforting delight with the grisly topic which both had been avoiding.

He heard the dull rumble of the dwarf's snores.

"I did not intend to speak of it to-night," he told her. "It seems a shame to speak of it. But perhaps there will not be as good an opportunity as this right away." He leaned toward her, his elbows on his knees. "Your brother sleeps soundly, doesn't he?"

"Yes," she said, staring at him with some wonderment.

"Don't be shocked. Take this in the way I mean it. But you and I are anxious to prove for our own peace of mind that Robert is innocent of murder. Therefore, in investigating, we must do some things that are not pleasant, either to do or to talk about. I want to say, Miss Laura"—he permitted himself this slight infraction of the formality between them, and her eyes glistened—"I believe that a rifle bullet killed Zadoc Chutter. You have intimated to me your fear that your brother may have attacked the victim with a crutch. Let us satisfy ourselves on that point so far as we can. Will you tiptoe into your brother's room and bring his crutches to me?"

Her face became pale. She hesitated, and then she obeyed.

"I trust to your good judgment," she said when she had brought the articles.

He examined the crutches for a long time, putting his magnifying glass to them. Then he asked her to bring him a screw driver. He carefully removed the metal faceplates which protected the arm rests of the crutches. With a penknife, he made scrapings of the wood and wrapped the scrapings in a bit of paper.

"Why are you doing that?" she inquired.

"Must I tell you?"

"I wish you would."

"If your brother beat his uncle with these crutches, he would have pounded downward, as the marks on the face seemed to indicate. In that case, blood

would have been forced under these plates, and no amount of washing would have removed the traces to be found where I have scraped. I shall submit these scrapings to the test for human blood."

"And you can tell whether human blood is there?"

"Most certainly." He was replacing the faceplates.

"But you think Uncle Zadoc was killed by a bullet, you say."

"I do, and I furthermore believe that those ugly wounds were made by a gun butt after the shooting. If we can eliminate your brother and his crutches, it will be something toward the support of my other theory."

He left her standing in the door, the light of the hall lamp making a halo of the loose locks of her soft hair.

He turned twice as he walked up the road, and saw that she was still in the doorway.

The bend of the road, where the alders grew, shut her from his view, and then, so it seemed to him, he was more alone than he had ever been before in all his life.

The stars were thickly sprinkled in a clear sky, and a shaving of moon gave him light. He had declined her proffered loan of a lantern, for he had an electric pocket lamp to serve him in case of need.

"She is depending on me," he told himself, "and until she goes to sleep this night she will be thinking of me. I feel in the mood to do something to deserve her confidence. I think I'll sleep in my new quarters in the Chutter house to-night." He chuckled. "I'll confess that I'm afraid of that long walk through the woods to the camp. I never did like the prospect of meeting a bear or a catamount."

There was a bit of the fanciful in Bingham's nature. When he came in sight of the house, the gable end, in the dim light, bore some resemblance to a

human countenance, and the close-set windows seemed like eyes which stared at him in menacing fashion.

He approached the place with much caution, and walked entirely around the house, keeping at a safe distance. He saw nothing which excited interest or suspicion.

At last, walking in from the field at the rear, he went to the window by which he had gained entry. When he had replaced the pegs in the loose windowpane, he had stuck an empty cocoon on one of the pegs. The cocoon was still there. He went in with entire confidence after that discovery. No one had preceded him.

He found that he could not replace the glass from the inside. He dropped the pane outside on the ground and re-fastened the catch of the window. He reflected that he himself, under those circumstances, were he the person who had fixed the window, would draw the conclusion that the wind had dislodged the pegged glass.

Doctor Bingham was too much of a practical scientist to admit even the possibility of the supernatural, now that brain and nerves were normal.

But this precipitate change from the cozy sitting room to the solemn, brooding, ominous blackness of this musty interior made him shrink in spite of his resolution. The presence of the girl had made the modest home not merely a haven, but a heaven for him. As he stood there in the hushed gloom, waiting until his nerves were steady, the contrast made the place almost horrible. In spite of his convictions, a nameless dread made him shiver. That implanted animal instinct, which ever seeks to subdue reason and judgment, was attacking his courage. The unknown was about him. This was not merely a deserted old house; it was the scene of a brutal crime which still remained a mystery.

He fell to wondering just who or

what it was that came down those stairs and appeared to Robert Chutter when he sat cowering in the corner. He wished he had subjected the dwarf to questioning.

The weight of the darkness became intolerable. He pushed the button on his flash light, and proceeded to pick his way through the confusion of furniture.

He went upstairs resolutely, put off his shoes, and crawled upon the husk mattress under the big bed. It had been a long day, crowded with many affairs, and he was very tired. But his eyes were propped wide open, and he was not sleepy.

He lay and canvassed the situation in its various phases, and found plenty to engage his thoughts.

The autumn crickets fiddled shrilly outside, and the night wind sighed and shuffled between the clapboards and the loose blinds. But there were no other sounds, and after a long time drowsiness weighed down the doctor's eyelids.

The sound that awakened him was sound with an emphasis!

It was a sort of clattering bang which shook the old house slightly and echoed through the rooms.

Bingham forgot where he was, and tried to snap upright. His forehead struck the oak frame of the ancient bedstead, and he fell back half stunned. Then he lay for a few moments and nursed the bump with his palm, and listened.

After a time, he heard somebody walking in one of the rooms below.

The man who prowled o' nights, so it appeared, was making another visit to the Chutter house.

Doctor Bingham took no chances on the rustling of the husk mattress. He rolled carefully off upon the floor, out from under the valance, and stole in stocking feet to the head of the stairs. A glimmer of light was moving about

below. Bingham went down a few steps, and leaned over the rail of the stairs, trusting to the shadows.

He saw the man, or, rather, the bulk of the man. The intruder carried a small bull's-eye lantern with rays directed toward the floor. He was coming from the direction of the old house's dining room, as Bingham understood the lay of land about the premises.

All at once the man stopped and turned the lantern up, so that his face was revealed.

He was Alanson Stewart, who had been foreman of the grand jury which convicted the man Jordan.

CHAPTER XII.

SOMETHING ABOUT A RIFLE.

Doctor Bingham looked down on the intruder with real apprehension.

He would have felt more at ease in the presence of a ghost. Stewart was pale, was manifestly keyed to a high nervous pitch, and he carried a rifle. He showed plainly that he was in that mood which prompts a man to shoot first and investigate afterward. He began to flash his lantern about him, and the doctor crouched low on the stairs, hugging close to the banisters. He did not dare to cry out and startle the man below, and he knew that in all probability Stewart would let drive at him should the former spy the silent figure.

Bingham shut his eyes, so that the lantern's light might not flash a gleam from them. It required much will power to perform that act. It was surrendering himself wholly to luck and chance; he did not know in which direction Stewart's eyes were traveling nor at what moment a bullet might pierce him.

When he heard the man move again, he opened his eyes. Stewart no longer held the rifle. A swinging ray from the bull's-eye showed that he had left it

leaning against a barrel. He turned his light on a sheet of paper which he held before him, cursed aloud, and crumpled the sheet and tossed it on the floor. Then he went on into another room, moving close to the walls, turning his lantern about to make minute examination, and sounding with his knuckles. In a little while, he turned the corner into still another room.

Then Doctor Bingham determined to possess himself of that rifle. Two motives actuated him. The first was the more compelling. He wanted to deprive an overwrought man of a dangerous weapon. With the gun in his own hands, he could venture to accost Alanson Stewart and demand an explanation which might help in clearing up the mystery. But the second motive was compelling also, even if it was not so vital to the present moment. Doctor Bingham was sure that a rifle bullet had killed Zadoc Chutter, and he wanted to find that rifle. As to how he might identify the weapon, he had his own ideas.

He stood up, pressing close to the handrail, and cautiously reached his foot to the stair below. He settled himself upon that foot, and found that the board did not creak. So he went down, step by step, keeping close to the rail, where the end of the tread was firmly supported. He proceeded noiselessly, and, having gauged direction and distance carefully before Stewart's lantern had left him in the dark, he reached the rifle. He retreated with it to the top of the stairs and waited.

After a time, in one of the distant rooms, another clatter startled him. There was silence for a few moments, and then Stewart came into sight, crumpling a paper in his fist and swearing roundly as he flung it from him. He did not glance up as he passed through the hall. He went straight to the barrel where he had left the rifle. Not finding it, he glanced sharply about

at other barrels. He looked on the floor; he peered into the barrel.

"Good Josephus!" he said aloud. "I left it here—this is the barrel—there's that damnation paper! Of course I left it here. But where is it?"

Doctor Bingham, although he did not know exactly what to say in order to open a delicate subject at a ticklish time, decided that he ought to speak.

"I have it up here, Mr. Stewart," he called, and in his excitement his tones were louder than he had intended them to be. His voice rang through the old house.

"Don't be alarmed," he hastened to add.

But Stewart was most decidedly alarmed. For a moment he stood shackled by the paralysis of terror, and then he ran. Bingham heard him kicking frantically at the sash and glass of the window; he heard him strike with a thud on the ground outside the house, and lastly heard the staccato beat of hurrying feet. There was no room to doubt the departure of the former foreman of the jury. Silence settled on the old house, and Doctor Bingham stood long at the head of the stairs and listened, wondering whether Stewart had companions who were still lurking about the premises. But the crickets fiddled and the mice skittered, and utter stillness was all about him.

He secured his flash light and went downstairs. Curiosity as to those papers which had infuriated Stewart was consuming him. He found the one which had been left in the room with the rifle. He smoothed it, and read this, written in big letters:

Made a fool of by a dead man. Keep hunting.

The other paper was merely a paraphrase of the grim humor:

My ghost is watching and laughing. Keep hunting.

Bingham set forth on further explo-

ration, wondering what had caused the noises he had heard. In one of the rooms he found that an old dairy closet had been pulled away from the wall and a crowbar lay on the floor near by. There was a hole in the wall behind the closet, an aperture a foot square through plaster and laths. There was nothing in the space, he discovered by reaching in his hand. The iron bar, so he guessed, had been pinched between the closet and the wall, either as makeshift burglar alarm during the lifetime of Zadoc Chutter or as a part of his post-mortem jest, so that it might fall with a clatter when the closet was moved.

In another room, he saw that a high-boy had been pulled away from the wall, disclosing a hole. A heavy wrench had been the alarm at this place.

So it was Alanson Stewart, brother of the governor of the State, who came prowling o' nights in the old mansion! And for what was he hunting?

It could not be any mere vulgar greed for gain, Bingham promptly decided. That prosperous village nabob, with his mill and his store, had enough of his own. Speculation as to what his object might be produced no results which the investigator considered to be of value.

"Facts, first! More facts!" insisted Bingham.

It was a fact that Alanson Stewart had been there hunting through the Chutter mansion. And Doctor Bingham went back a few months in his thoughts and accepted as a fact the presence of Governor Stewart in that locality on the night that Chutter had been murdered.

Furthermore, this rifle which the doctor held in his hands and examined with interest was a fact. And he had just seen that rifle in the hands of Alanson Stewart. From a more minute examination of that rifle, he hoped to obtain additional facts.

He put the papers in his pocket, took the rifle, and carefully picked his way through the litter and out of the window, now yawning wide to the night air. By using his flash light, he found his way back to his camp and tucked himself up on his cot and slept the sleep of the weary.

When he woke, he prepared a hasty breakfast for himself, slung his knapsack on his shoulders, and started out, the rifle in the hook of his arm. He trudged to the railroad's way station up the line and took the first train for the city, attracting only the indifferent attention which is bestowed on sportsman in the autumn. As for other persons in the world, Doctor Bingham gave them no attention whatever. Though he looked at persons, he did not see them. He was docketing facts; he was assorting happenings; he was putting all the power of his intellect on a problem.

When he arrived in the city, he went to the shop of a gunsmith. At his request, the smith inserted a dozen empty shells into as many different rifles and pulled the trigger, leaving the imprint of the firing pin on the copper of the shell. Bingham wrapped those shells and put them away in his knapsack.

"What do you know about the marks of firing pins?" he asked the smith. "Does each rifle, even of the same make, leave its own distinctive mark on the shell?"

"Never stopped to think about it," confessed the man.

"Well, what do you think about it?"

The smith hesitated.

"It would be more or less guesswork with me," he admitted. "But I've got a brother who is super in the Collins Arms Factory. He'll probably know about it. Are you in any hurry?"

"Yes," stated the doctor briskly. "Please understand that I'm not troubling you with idle curiosity. A man's life is at stake."

"If you'll pay for the long-distance call, I'll ask my brother."

Doctor Bingham agreed, and the smith asked his question. He hung up the receiver and turned to his visitor.

"My brother says that the mark of the firing pin of each rifle on a shell is just as individual to itself—that's how he said it—as the nicks on a safety-lock key or the prints of a man's thumbs."

"Thank you," said the doctor. "Here's pay for the shells and your trouble."

"But my brother says that it takes a good eye and a blamed good microscope to understand what you're looking at when you examine for those marks."

"I have the microscope," was the doctor's crisp rejoinder.

He hurried directly to his laboratory at the State university.

"Did you see Bingham when he went down the corridor just now?" asked the professor of biology of the assistant in chemistry. "Say, do you know I was worried about him a while back! But he seems to be on his feet again."

But just then Doctor Bingham was on one foot.

He was in his private room, off the main laboratory, and the door was locked, and he was grinding between the heel of the other foot and the tiled floor various vials which he had taken from a secret drawer.

"Damn you!" he growled. "That's what I think of you."

Mere smashing of those vials would not have fitted with his mood. To feel them under his heel, and to know that there was something within him that now made him superior to coercion or blandishment by the demon, filled him with a glory of exultation. He closed his eyes and pictured the girl's face, as he had seen it last in the doorway, the halo of her soft hair framing her features.

"And you were afraid you could not

help me," he murmured. "Bless God for you!"

Then he went at his work with fervor.

He took things in their order, and the scrapings from the dwarf's crutches came first. Painstakingly, he made his tests.

"I can tell her this comforting thing," he said at last. "Neither Zadoc Chutter's blood nor any other man's blood is on those crutches."

He unscrewed the faceplate from the rifle's butt. After the screws had been removed, he was obliged to use the tip of the screw driver to pry the faceplate loose. The metal seemed to be gummed to the wood. His face was grave. More painstakingly did he carry through the processes of the next test.

At last he took his eye from the microscope.

"Blood!" he whispered. "Human blood!"

Then he set himself to examining the marked shells, and noting the differences in the serrations of the marks of the firing pins.

He slipped a fresh shell into the rifle he had brought from Monmouth, and pulled the trigger. Then he compared the shell which he had taken from the breast of Zadoc Chutter with the freshly marked copper, using the most powerful microscope in the laboratory.

He made rough drawings in enlargement, and noted every nick. He was dealing with facts, not with theories; he was a scientist, critical of his own judgment. And he rose from that examination, convinced beyond all doubt: the shell that he had picked up from the old man's breast had been marked by the firing pin of the rifle which he had seen the night before in the hands of Alanson Stewart.

Doctor Bingham was not in the mood to fence with that situation any longer. He determined to close in and grasp it.

The next day he walked into Alanson Stewart's mill office, in the town of Clifton.

He was not received cordially when he was admitted to the village magistrate's sanctum, a little room off the main office. In fact, Mr. Stewart scowled, and then his eyes shifted uneasily under the visitor's steady gaze.

"You remember me, Mr. Stewart?"

"Certainly," snapped the other. "You were on the jury with me a few days ago. Why shouldn't I remember you?"

"We did not get very well acquainted on the jury," returned the doctor, a bit significantly. "Perhaps I should have asked you if you know me—know just who I am?"

"You're Doctor Bingham, and you're connected with the State university. Have you suffered any loss of memory? Are you here trying to establish your identity?"

"You seem to know so well who I am, that I gather you have been talking with your brother, Governor Stewart," said Bingham quietly.

"I told you I should talk with him—warn him in regard to you."

Stewart's face was hard, and his cold eyes were narrowed. His tone indicated that he proposed to fight.

Doctor Bingham, more than ever determined to close in and grapple, understood the advantage of a first and a quick blow.

"I'm sorry that I was obliged to follow you here to Clifton, Mr. Stewart, and bother you in business hours. You seemed to have more time on your hands night before last, when I tried to talk with you in the Chutter house."

Stewart leaped to his feet. His eyes were now wide open and blazing.

"That's a confounded lie!"

Doctor Bingham put up his hand in protest.

"Let's discuss the matter calmly, Mr. Stewart. I say, I was there. I was alone, and the matter is between the

two of us, and better be handled quietly. Will you sit down?"

Stewart obeyed the suggestion. He clutched the chair arms to hide the trembling of his hands.

"I realize, perfectly, that the matter of your interest in this affair is capable of explanation, sir. I declare myself as an investigator. I am out for the purpose of digging into this thing to the depths."

"For what reason?"

"I might say, to save the man Jordan, providing he is innocent. If I have other reasons, they are my own, and do not matter. Now, just one moment, sir! I am merely hunting for facts. That's why I have come to you. That's why I took your gun last night, and I apologize for——"

"That was not my gun."

This protestation was made fiercely.

"I saw it in your hands. You hunted for it when you found it gone. I believed it was *your* gun. I did not insult you by thinking you came to the Chutter house to commit petty larceny."

"What are you trying to insinuate—that I killed Chutter?" demanded Stewart, with heat. "I say the gun was not—is not mine. I found it in the house in one of those holes in the wall."

"I hope you can prove that."

"Why?"

"Because Zadoc Chutter was killed by a bullet from a rifle."

"The autopsy——"

"A half-baked affair by a slam-bang country doctor."

"Who knows he was killed by a bullet?"

"I do."

"Well, how do you know?"

"I was in the Chutter house before the doctor or officers came. I discovered that he had been killed by a bullet."

"Why are you hiding it? Why didn't

you tell the court? Why were you sneaking onto that jury?"

"All my own business at present, and to be answered when I am ready to answer, sir."

Stewart was plainly emboldened to discover that another man was owning up that he had been implicated in the Chutter case and had been concealing important knowledge.

"And how does it happen to be any affair of mine about that gun—or any other gun?" barked the ex-foreman of the jury. He banged the flat of his big hand on the chair arm. "I say again the gun is not mine. I found it there in the house."

"And I repeat that I hope you can substantiate that statement," returned the doctor, meeting the other's ferocity with quiet dignity. "Because I am in a position to prove that from that rifle came the bullet which killed Chutter, and that the butt of the same weapon was undoubtedly used to batter his face."

"A thing like that can't be proved."

"A court of justice might think differently after it had listened to my facts," said the doctor. Then he rose. There is always a psychological moment when departure is effective after a message has been delivered. "I am not here to argue this affair with you, sir. I have merely called to give you something to think over. You understand better than I what your part in this affair has been. There is a man in prison awaiting execution. You and I helped to put him there. I am going away so that you may take counsel with yourself—or with anybody else who is interested." He stared fully at the magnate when he spoke the last words, and there was significance in his tones. "You will remember that I referred to a certain matter the last time we had any words about the Chutter case. I shall be at the university for the next twenty-four hours. If you

feel that you or anybody else wishes to confer with me, I shall be at your service."

He bade Mr. Stewart a respectful "Good day!" and walked out before the magnate of Clifton recovered enough self-possession to reply.

CHAPTER XIII.

BEHIND THE DOOR OF THE EXECUTIVE CHAMBER.

Doctor Bingham understood exactly what sort of a self-acting proposition he had left behind him in the office of Stewart of Clifton. He turned his back on it, returned to his work in the laboratory, and awaited results.

He was called to the telephone early in the forenoon of the day following his visit to the governor's brother.

"This is Stewart—Alanson," said the voice. "I'm up at the capital city. Regarding that business talk we had yesterday—can you meet me here at the Hotel Avon this evening at ten o'clock?"

"I can—I will."

"Thank you."

Doctor Bingham, after noting in his newspaper the time of the departure of the evening train that would best suit the hour of the appointment, went back to his work.

He did not allow himself to theorize, to prejudge, to anticipate.

He was searching for facts. He felt that he was about to add some still more important facts to the scanty store he then possessed. And, having decided thus, he concentrated his mind on his own affairs and put in a busy and profitable day.

He found Stewart pacing the lobby when he arrived at the Hotel Avon. The tall foreman looked down on Bingham from under frowning brows, kept his hands behind him, and by tone and demeanor let it be known that this was an armed truce.

"I hope you do not object to the unusual hour, Doctor Bingham. But it is busy, daytimes, up at the statehouse, and my brother and I don't want anybody breaking in on the little talk we're going to have with you. Will you ride or walk?"

"I'll walk if it suits you. I feel the need of a little air and exercise after that train ride."

They did not exchange a word on the way to the statehouse. They went in at a side entrance under the eye of a watchman, who jerked respectful salute when he saw the governor's brother. Stewart did not bother with the elevator, but led the way up the broad stairs, across the dimly lighted lobbies of house and senate, and when he tapped on the door of the executive chamber, Governor Stewart opened the door with his own hand. He promptly closed it behind the visitors, and locked it.

His excellency did not adopt the attitude of the brother; as a politician, he was able to disguise his feelings under shallow geniality. But he was plainly ill at ease, and his welcome to Bingham was touched with a queer sort of wistfulness. The doctor, after his experience with Stewart of Clifton, had braced himself to meet almost anything in the way of furious malediction from Stewart of the statehouse—the man whom the politicians called Old Rough and Ready.

Doctor Bingham had disobeyed the governor's injunction to keep his mouth shut.

He had thrown down the gage of battle before the governor's brother.

He had intimated that he proposed to dig into the heart of the Chutter mystery, without regard to the persons and interests concerned in the matter.

But this old man who pushed out a chair for him and took his hat and coat, and hung them up and inquired solicitously whether his stay in the

country had helped him took the doctor off his mental feet.

The visitor was disconcerted; he was like one who had pushed against a door, thinking it was locked, and found it would open at a touch. He declined the cigar the governor tendered, explaining clumsily that tobacco troubled his nerves.

"It soothes mine," said his excellency, lying back in his big chair and resuming the cigar which he had laid down.

There was but one light in the chamber, flooding downward from a shaded globe on the flat desk in the middle of the room. Governor Stewart had placed his own chair so that his face was in the shadow. Bingham's face was in the full glow of the light, but he did not presume to shift his chair from the spot where the governor had pushed it.

"It—it has been good fall weather so far," remarked the chief executive after an uncomfortable silence. His tones were mild and pacificatory. There was a little tremble in his voice. "Are you settled down to your regular work again, Doctor Bingham?"

"I have been down in the country—down in Monmouth for a short time. I hope to be settled to my work before long—after I have cleared up the matter I am now engaged on."

There was another silence.

Bingham could see the feet and legs of the old man in the big chair. On the feet were old-fashioned boots, and the trousers were wrinkled, and one trousers leg was hitched up over the tag on a boot. Somehow, just why he could not explain to himself, he began to feel a warming sympathy for this old man who seemed so humble, even though he sat as master in the big chair in the State's executive chamber.

"That matter, so I am told, is the Chutter case," said the governor after a time. He was even more deferential;

there was something like meek appeal in his voice.

"It is, your excellency."

Alanson Stewart shifted his feet impatiently, and grunted.

"I have had a little talk with my brother here. He tells me you make some very astonishing statements," the governor suggested.

"I have told Mr. Stewart certain facts, sir."

"But are they facts?"

"I have stated them as facts on my own honest belief, your excellency."

"You say, do you, that Chutter was killed by a bullet?"

"I do."

"And yet, not exactly capable of proof, is it?" The governor's tone was still more deferential; it quavered.

"The body can prove it, sir. It lies in the grave, and I believe the bullet can be found within the skull. The autopsy was very much of a botch."

"So it would seem," acknowledged his excellency. He smoked on, and knocked ashes into a wastebasket, and then stared at the end of his cigar.

"I have told my brother all that you have told me. So you needn't rehash any of the stuff," advised Alanson Stewart. "He and I feel that you are chasing us as if you thought we had killed that man."

"You don't think that, do you, Doctor Bingham?" asked the governor wistfully, his voice breaking.

"I am not jumping at conclusions in this matter, sir. I am collecting facts."

"Let us start right. What is your special and peculiar interest in this matter, Doctor Bingham? You did not tell my brother."

"I happened to be dragged into the matter by force of circumstances, governor, even to sitting on the jury which convicted Jordan of the murder." Bingham's voice was sharp and bitter. "And I know facts which may help to save that man from the gallows. As a

man, and for my own peace of mind and in the interests of justice, I believe it's my duty to investigate. Under those circumstances, I hope you don't think that I'm a mere meddler."

"But you're chasing up innocent men—you're trying to drag down those in high places—it's almost blackmail!" barked the governor's brother.

"Hold on, Alanson! You're too hasty; you always were hasty. Let's keep all this on a friendly basis. We'll get along all right after we understand each other. Doctor Bingham's reasons are excellent. There's a man facing death. I'm going to say here and now that I do not believe he is guilty. My brother and I do not believe that he committed that crime, doctor. I'm going to be frank and tell you that my brother was on that jury by design—such things can be easily arranged by pulling the right strings. We did not expect that the circumstantial evidence would be so strong. We did not expect that those young fools of lawyers would put that man on the stand. We did not expect a lot of things which did happen. We hoped for a disagreement. We had plans made whereby I could save my political face by pardoning that man. We planned——"

"Are you losing your mind, Anson?" demanded the brother. "You are turning yourself inside out before this man who is our declared enemy."

"He will not be our enemy when he understands," insisted the governor. "You say you are looking for facts, Doctor Bingham. I don't know you very well. I wonder if you are a man who can weigh facts and accept them for what they are worth."

"Governor Stewart," blurted the doctor, "what you have just said to me touches me more deeply than I can make you understand in mere words. I am simply investigating this case in the interests of the truth. And I do believe that you have reasons of your

own for wanting to have the truth of the matter dug out."

The governor banged his hand down on the arm of his chair, and there was no doubting his sincerity when he replied: "Only God knows how much I do want this matter cleared up!"

"Then we need facts, sir, and I believe that my past training in dealing with facts in my profession enables me to estimate their value in this case."

"I am going to tell you something——" began the governor.

"This is against my advice, Anson!" his brother broke in. "You have the whole matter right in your own hands. This amateur sleuth is a bluffer. What if he did see you in Monmouth that night? You were there on your own business."

"I know it, Alanson. But I want Doctor Bingham to know it." The governor was mild in his reply.

"When he saw me in that house, I was there on business—I had better reason and as much right to be there as he. As to that gun—bah! I never saw it till that night. I warn you again! Don't open up your private business to this man."

"I think I have explained that I am not a mere meddler," said Doctor Bingham, with dignity. "Governor Stewart, if you can give me facts that will help in this matter, I swear that I will use them to your advantage—if need arises—with all the power that is in me. Let me tell you this: I am confident that there is some horrible—I hardly know what to call it! But there is some vital breach in the foundation of this Chutter case. The real inside of the mystery has not been touched upon at all. I tell you again, I have not dared to theorize. I have merely collected facts. I told your brother a few—for his own good, so I believed. I'm afraid he misconstrued my interest. Perhaps I should have been a bit less aggressive. But you did not encourage me

to be confidential with you, Mr. Stewart."

He turned on the flaming magnate of Clifton.

"You are too short—too sharp, Alanson," said the governor reproachfully.

"I don't propose to have any man dogging my footsteps," retorted the irreconcilable brother.

"Your excellency, I am not soliciting anything from you which you do not want to give to me," continued the doctor, disregarding the insult.

"I feel that our interests in the matter may be mutual," stated the governor.

"Before you say anything to me, I want to tell you more facts—I believe them to be facts. My frankness may convince you that I am not trying to build up a case against any man on theory." He gave Alanson Stewart a side glance. "On the day before that murder, or rather in the late afternoon of the day before the murder was discovered, a man came into that camp where I was stopping in Monmouth. I thought he was Zadoc Chutter. He closely resembled Zadoc Chutter, whom I had seen only once and for a short time in the dusk of an evening. But this man informed me that he was not Zadoc Chutter. He went away in a few minutes. I can produce a witness who says that he was sitting in the Chutter house at about daylight the next morning and saw Zadoc Chutter—or a man who seemed to be Zadoc Chutter in form and feature—come downstairs and walk out of the house, carrying a satchel."

"Say, what sort of a convention was held in that house before the crime was reported?" demanded the brother. "You seem to know a whole lot for a man who kept his mouth closed during that trial."

"I had good reasons for keeping my mouth closed, sir. I am justifying myself now by opening it."

"Go on, Doctor Bingham," entreated the governor, his voice husky, the expression on his face concealed by the gloom in which he sat.

"Just a moment! Who is that witness?" asked the brother.

"Robert Chutter—and he ought to know his own uncle pretty well."

"Robert Chutter! Good Jehoshaphat! Robert Chutter! A credible witness!" rapped out Alanson Stewart. He leaped out of his chair and stamped around the desk, and came in front of Doctor Bingham. "Robert Chutter is a crazy degenerate, and has been one for years, Bingham. Nobody would ever believe him."

"It might help out a good many persons who are now concerned in this case if he could be believed," replied the doctor, meeting Stewart's gaze firmly and speaking with significance.

"He is the man who ought to have been put into the prisoner's dock instead of Lemuel Jordan," insisted the other. "It came to me as I sat there looking at him. I have heard that he was around everywhere, trying to beg or borrow money before that murder was committed. He took those crutches and beat old Zadoc to death. I wonder now why the State overlooked that devilish land crab. Anson, the thing to do is to start a back fire with Chutter and save Jordan that way. We can convict that cripple."

Doctor Bingham waited a little while. His voice was low, but it was the voice of a man who knew what he was talking about:

"Gentlemen, I tell you again that Zadoc Chutter was killed by a bullet. His own body will be a conclusive witness on that point. I further say that Robert Chutter did not assault his uncle with his crutches. Human blood was under the faceplate of that rifle butt. Robert Chutter's crutches had no blood on them. I examined. I know. That back fire you are talking about, Mr.

Stewart, will be a dangerous one if you set it. And if the cripple is crazy, and cannot be believed, I can produce another witness who saw Zadoc Chutter—or the replica of Zadoc Chutter—on that morning. That witness is myself!"

They were silent, and stared at him.

"He climbed the wall at the place where I lighted you over, Governor Stewart. After you rode away, I sat down under a tree and waited there till morning—merely from personal reasons. Then I went to Zadoc Chutter's house and found him there, dead on the floor. He had been dead, so I judged, several hours—possibly ten hours."

"I—I don't understand," faltered the governor. "You declare that you saw Zadoc Chutter walk away—and then you add that you found him dead in his house a little later. This seems to be mixed badly."

"Of course it's mixed," declared the brother. "That story would be laughed out of court by any jury. It's the most infernal nonsense I ever heard."

"It's the kind of nonsense that demands brains instead of bluster," retorted Doctor Bingham. "Mr. Stewart," he went on, standing up and facing the man who had baited him, "we are dipping into one of the strangest mysteries men ever dealt with. I think I see light peeping through one chink in the case. I'll have something to report on it a little later, I hope. But in all this affair I am working honestly for the benefit of those who are innocent of the murder. And that means I am working for Governor Stewart and for you. I'm going to be frank. I believe that you both have facts which will help me. I do not believe either of you killed Zadoc Chutter. That sounds rather brutally frank, I realize. But it's honest. Now—after saying that—I warn you, Mr. Stewart, against giving me any more

of your insults. I have taken the last word of that sort from you."

"Alanson, sit down!" commanded the governor. "Sit down, and keep your tongue between your teeth if you can't control it in any other way. I have something to tell Doctor Bingham."

"If you're going to unload in spite of all I have said to warn you, this is where I step out and leave you to your own damnation," said his brother.

"Very well! You are excused," said the governor coldly. "I am not under guardianship, Alanson."

"And that's the kind of gratitude you've got, after I've done what I have—went through hell on a jury, and then worse than hell—rummaging that house and standing a chance of being accused of murder by that imitation detective you're protecting just now?"

"Don't question my gratitude, brother."

"I do question it when you throw away my advice. This man is here to dig for what information he can get—he has said so."

"I am here for that purpose," assented the doctor. "And I hope that the information I collect will help those who need help."

Alanson Stewart turned his back on Bingham, and went close to the governor.

"Do you insist on being foolish, Anson?"

"I am going to be wise at a time when I think this matter needs wisdom, brother." There was the finality of resolve in his excellency's voice.

"I know you too well to argue with you, but I'm done." He dusted his hands, walked out, and slammed the door behind him.

"Will you please sit down, Doctor Bingham?" invited the governor. "I'm going to talk to you straight from my heart—and I believe it is right to do so—and I think it's just as well that we are alone."

5B

CHAPTER XIV.

FROM A SECRET CASKET.

The hush in the great house of the people on capitol hill was supreme at that hour of the night. And the governor did not immediately break upon that hush. He sat with his face in the shadow, as before.

"Let me ask you something, Doctor Bingham, so that we can get together as men, with a mutual understanding of each other. Have you worked your own way in the world, or were you born with the silver spoon, as the saying is?"

"I was kicked into the street to sell papers, governor, before I was ten years old. I have fought my own way ever since."

Governor Stewart leaned forward, and the light shone upon his seamed face.

"I am sorry for your sake, but I am glad for my own, Doctor Bingham. I will not be obliged to explain a lot of things to you, now that I know how you have had to meet the world. We shall understand each other. The folks who sneer behind my back and call me Old Rough and Ready do not understand. When I was big enough to work, I was taken out of an industrial school by a farmer who had a knot in the end of his whiplash for his horses, and stimulated the milk supply in his cows with the flat of a barn shovel. What he did to me I need not tell you. You must know that sort of a man! And I grew up with a well-developed set of grudges against humanity in general. He dressed me in clothes made out of his old butcher's frocks. If he found me trying to spell out the words in a book, he kicked me."

He leaned back in his chair.

"I am not patient or polished. I reckon my nickname fits me. I am hard. When I remember what kind of food was given me when I was a grow-

ing boy it's a wonder to me that I'm not petrified. Once when the farmer drove into town to hawk his vegetables he had a sore foot, and took me along to do the lugging and the running. And we were held up on a main street, and a policeman cursed us for being yaps and getting in the way, and grabbed the horse by the bits and backed us into the mouth of an alley. And then along came a brass band and a lot of carriages, and that farmer who even ate his meals at home with his hat on stood up in the wagon and took off his hat. And I was so astonished by what he did that I mustered up courage to ask him why he did that. And he told me that the governor of the State was going past us.

"Doctor Bingham, at that moment the desire was born in me to become the governor of my State. I had seen the brute who had tortured me stand up and take off his hat to a human being—and I wanted to be that sort of a human being. Every night after that, year after year, I lay awake just as long as I could, and was governor in my imagination. I carried on the story. I was glad to get into bed so as to live in my thoughts as a governor. I didn't know very much about how governors did live or what they had to do. As I remember, I was mostly engaged in riding in parades behind brass bands. And I always had a rod in pickle for brutal farmer men who abused poor little boys bound out to them from industrial schools.

"You know what is said about the efficacy of keeping your mind everlasting on one idea, doctor.

"To-day I am governor of this State. It is the goal, the end, my dream realized. I want nothing else. I ask only this—to be let alone to serve my term out honestly and honorably—to have the respect of the people as a good governor."

He beat his hand down on the chair arm.

"They can say I'm Old Rough and Ready if it pleases them. I know I am. The aristocrats can laugh at me behind my back, if they enjoy that kind of fun, and can make jokes about my boots and my clothes and my manners. I don't care. I can turn around and laugh at the airs of the aristocrats, and can have a good time doing it. But if my character as a man is torn to shreds before the people who elected me, and if I am driven into being a traitor to the best interests of this State, then—then being governor is not an honor—it is hell!"

There were wrath and a wail in his tones.

"And a man in this State has been heating that hell for me, Doctor Bingham!"

Again he shoved his face forward into the glow from the light on the desk. He hitched his big chair toward the doctor, and sat in the light.

"I am putting myself in your hands, Doctor Bingham. I haven't stopped to argue with myself. There's considerable animal in me. I guess it's instinct prompting me. But I'm frank with you. I'm putting myself under suspicion when I tell you that man's name. For he's dead—he has been murdered; he was Zadoc Chutter!"

He hesitated a moment. Bingham did not venture comment; he had no words to fit that situation.

"By the gods, I almost want to say—at the risk of being thought a lunatic—that he *is* Zadoc Chutter—still is Zadoc Chutter! Men say he is buried in a graveyard—you tell me that you saw him lying dead in his house. But look at that! Read it!"

He drove his hand into the breast pocket of his coat, pulled out a letter, and tossed it at the doctor.

"Read it aloud," directed the gov-

error. "I know how it looks—I want to hear how it sounds."

Doctor Bingham read:

"When you killed me, Anse Stewart, you were putting too much stock in the saying that 'dead men tell no tales.'"

The doctor paused a moment, for the writing was staggering and hard to decipher.

"A damnable lie!" yelled the governor. "I didn't kill him. He is pointing his finger out of the grave at me with another accusation on top of all the rest he has been preparing."

Bingham continued to read:

"You are now just where I have always wanted you to be—at the top of the heap. I could have got you a good while ago—but I've been willing to wait. Anse Stewart would have tumbled a little ways. But Governor Stewart—it's going to be an awful fall. Get ready!"

The letter was not signed. It was not dated.

"Others have come along since," stated the governor. "No matter about them. They are all of the same sort. It's lingering agony. The sword is over me and I don't know when it's going to drop. Just now he is playing with me. He has given me a week in which to make a certain appointment to a State office—tells me to give the job to a man who is so notoriously unfit that I can't explain my action to anybody."

Doctor Bingham was examining the blurred postmark under the small glass he had taken from his pocket.

"If I won't allow myself to be hacked in pieces, a nick at a time, he proposes to blow me up with one explosion. I must be crazy. I'm talking as if he were alive. But I keep getting those letters."

"This one was the first?"

"Yes."

"It is postmarked at least two weeks after the murder."

"That's when I got it—and the others, I say, keep coming."

"Is this Zadoc Chutter's handwriting?"

"No, and I know his handwriting only too well," said the governor, with bitterness.

"This letter was written with the left hand," stated the doctor. "I have had occasion to make tests in chiropgraphy. Therefore, we may conclude that the letter was written by some one who wanted to disguise his hand."

"It's my nature to take one thing at a time and go through with it," declared Governor Stewart. "I'm going to open up the matter in regard to Chutter and myself. Let me ask you another question, doctor. When you started to fight your way up, and everybody seemed to be kicking you back again, and pounding your knuckles every time you got a handhold, were you ever tempted? Did you ever say to yourself: 'That's wrong—but I'll do it; I've got to get my start?'"

"I was tempted a great many times, sir."

"Did you yield? I ask your pardon for that question, but I'm in a desperate state of mind, doctor, and I want to get as close to you, man to man, as I can to-night. Did you give up to temptation?"

"No, sir! I managed to stick it out," said Bingham, with convincing candor.

"I didn't," confessed the other. "It was opportunity, and I grabbed it. I know that there are a good many men who have done the same thing in another way and have succeeded and have forgotten what they did as best they could forget, and have forgiven themselves in self-pity. A man can pity himself with a lot of fervor, Doctor Bingham. But I have not forgiven myself. I got my first ten thousand dollars—the foundation of the fortune I have piled up since—by helping Zadoc Chutter rob his own brother—his twin brother Zebulon. And that tells you something about what kind of a man

Zadoc Chutter was when he held a grudge! His own brother!"

"I talked with him only once, sir. He was very frank in declaring his hatred of the world in general."

"And that is why I knew, when he began to hate me, just how useless it was to explain or beg. When I said I helped him rob his brother, Doctor Bingham, I did not mean that we knocked the man down to do it. I was in the law—I was prosecuting attorney for the county. I was so poor that I covered blocks of wood with brown paper and labeled them as law books for my shelves in order to fool clients. Zadoc Chutter was in law, too, in those days. I will not bother you with details. I am ashamed to talk about the details. But he took his brother's case to court and betrayed him, and we took money from a rich man who was guilty, and we fastened the crime on Zebulon Chutter, and he ran away—and then, by means of papers we forged, we got his estate and divided it between ourselves. And Zebulon Chutter left helpless children behind him!"

Doctor Bingham's eyes flashed, and his teeth showed behind his lips, hard-set. The governor flinched under the gaze.

"I'm going through with this," quavered the man in the big chair. "Confession isn't good for my soul. Confession doesn't help me. But you must know. You seem to be the only man who can help me. You knew so much that it's best for you to know all. I can't help feeling that way. But, O God, what a—what a——" He could not complete the sentence. He rose and paced the executive chamber, beating his fist into his palm behind his back.

Doctor Bingham sat and stared into vacancy, and saw the girl who had stood in the doorway of her cottage, the lamp-light making a halo of her hair.

"I don't know what became of Zebu-

lon. I didn't want to know. I didn't dare to know," groaned the governor.

After a time, Bingham was able to control his flaming indignation and his voice.

"I have been able to decipher the postmark on this envelope, Governor Stewart, and I have good reason for believing that Zebulon Chutter has been in the little town from which this letter came. Whether he has lived there for any length of time, or where he is there now, I have not yet learned. I hope to know a little later."

The governor's lips were white when he came back to the desk.

"Zebulon!" he whispered. "Then it's Zebulon who has got hold of those documents! It's Zebulon who is now getting ready to take me by the throat. I could have dragged Zadoc Chutter down into ruin with me—we would have been damned together—he might have held off when he realized what it would mean in his own case. But Zebulon!"

He propped himself on the desk with arms which shook under him.

"I'm done," he moaned. "I'm finished. I can't deal with Zebulon Chutter. I can't even ask mercy from him. I'd be ashamed to do so. I owe him every ounce of revenge he can get out of me, my money, and my position. It was Zebulon you saw in that camp. It was Zebulon who came down those stairs, and you saw him go away. They were twins—they looked alike."

"Probably it was the brother of Zadoc," agreed the doctor. His air was frigid—his tones were cold.

Then, after a moment of silence, he spoke sharply:

"Governor Stewart, I have been touched deeply by some things you have said to-night. As to the rest, I prefer to offer no comment. It's none of my business, and I shall keep still about it. You can trust me. But I must remind you that it is my business—as I see it

—to investigate the Chutter murder. Have you any information on that point for me? Do you know who did kill that man who was found dead in the Chutter house?"

His excellency sat down.

"Let me get myself under control a little," he pleaded.

Bingham sat upright, waiting in silence.

"You know I was in the vicinity of the Chutter house that night, doctor. You saw me. You must have my explanation. By all that is holy, I am telling you the truth!"

"On the day that I was inaugurated, Zadoc Chutter came to the statehouse here. When I stood up in the joint session, after taking the oath of office, to read my address, I saw him before I had spoken a word. And he sat there with that awful grin on his face. I sensed what he meant. I had looked forward to that day as the sweetest one of my life. He had never warned me of what he proposed to do. But while I was reading I saw him every time I looked up, and I knew. Doctor Bingham, I knew why he was there. I knew what he had for a weapon. I knew what he had done to other men whom he hated. You don't want to bother with the details of why he had come to hate me. He had centered on me all the hate that was left in his old carcass—and he sat there and grinned at me, and he turned that day into the most miserable one in all my life, sir. He had the proof against me in documents!"

It was plain that his excellency was striving to control his emotions during this interview. When he found his voice or his passion getting away from him, he stopped short. Doctor Bingham respected those silences.

"Some of the papers were his own—the rest he stole from me, and when we were close-locked in that criminal intimacy of ours I was fool enough to

write letters to him. And he hasn't lost a scrap of paper. After my inauguration, he began to stick red-hot needles into me. Every day a letter came to me from him. Every letter contained a bit copied from this or that document. I had forgotten some of those documents—I'd forgotten what an infernal fool I had been in some of those letters. But Zadoc Chutter saw to it that I was fully and properly reminded. And when he knew that he had me both sweating and shivering, he walked in on me one day in this room with that grin on his face."

Once more the governor pulled himself out of his chair and paced the chamber.

"You think you're governor of this State now, Stewart, do you?" he sneered. "Feel pretty pleased and pretty proud, eh? The great dream has come true, has it? On your throne with your crown on at last! Well, this is what I have been waiting for!"

The chief executive stopped in front of the man to whom he was opening his heart with that passion of confession a man displays when he has found his secret too heavy to be borne alone.

"Do you know what damnable scheme of revenge he had devised, Bingham?" He leaned over the listener, his convulsed face close to the doctor's.

"He proposed to be the actual governor of this State. To stand behind me and work me as he would dance a jumping jack. To make me submit every appointment, every bit of State's business to him for his consideration before I dared to act or make up my mind on it even! And it wasn't in his scheme to serve good ends by doing that. He proposed to play with the State in order to amuse himself. To put cheap men in good jobs. To make me seem like fool and knave both. He gave me my choice between that slow agony or a grand smash—one instan-

taneous explosion that would scatter my reputation from hell to hackenny. Fine choice that, eh?"

He straightened, and shook his fists above his head.

"I want to tell you this, Doctor Bingham! I did not murder Zadoc Chutter. That is on my solemn oath! But when he stood in front of me with that grin and told me how he proposed to crucify my pride, my reputation, my happiness, my peace of mind, my realization of my lifelong dream—and do it by slow degrees during my term of office, I would have killed him right here in this chamber if I had known how to hide the crime. I was a murderer in my thoughts. I simply lacked opportunity."

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT DID LEMUEL JORDAN DO?

"So now, Doctor Bingham, I have shown you pretty clearly that I am not a saint," went on the governor. "I have confessed to you that I had murder in my heart. As to motive—I had every human reason for killing Zadoc Chutter. Talk about the right of self-defense—when a man defends his body against assault! Chutter was attacking my soul, Doctor Bingham—my soul! I was in the vicinity when that crime was committed. Now what chance would I stand before a jury if all those facts were known?"

"You understand men and the limitations of the human mind even better than I do, Governor Stewart. In my opinion you would be convicted in spite of the position you hold in this State."

"Exactly. That's what circumstantial evidence amounts to, sir. Now a plain and blunt question! Answer me truthfully. After what I have told you, do you think I killed Zadoc Chutter?"

"I do not think so, Governor Stewart," answered the doctor, with the firmness of utter conviction.

"You are right—and now I am going to tell you exactly what I did do in the matter." His excellency's voice lost its rasp, and he sat down. "I staved off the blow-up. It's human nature to hope. Figuratively speaking, I doubled my arms over my head and allowed Chutter to lick me around in a circle for a time. I wasn't ready to endure the grand smash. I hoped I could work him around so that he would have pity on me. He began rather easy—he forced me to make fool appointments rather than wicked ones. Men grumbled and did not understand—but they did not rise up and rave."

He leaned forward, taking the doctor even more completely into confidence.

"In politics many acts can be explained on the ground of expediency and exigency. But I knew I could never explain to the people of this State why I vetoed the corporation-tax bill, after a commission had worked on it for two years and had framed a measure that would give the people their just dues for the first time in the history of the State. But Chutter held his club over my head, and commanded me to veto that bill. He and I both knew it would pass over my veto. He simply wanted to ruin me. He wanted to make me a shameful figure—make me out a tool of the corporations after all the talk I had made about being of and for the people.

"I found out, through the bank examiner's office, that Chutter had removed his papers from the safety-deposit boxes of several banks. I don't know his reasons exactly. He may have wanted to have them at hand for his work; he may have distrusted my influence in the banking department. I decided that he had concealed the papers in his house. I went to the one man who hated Chutter as heartily as I hated him. That was Lemuel Jordan. I didn't tell Jordan too much. I didn't

need to. He was only too glad to help me in any way he could.

"I sent Jordan into the Chutter house ahead of me that night. It was late, and the coast seemed to be all clear. I don't claim that my plan was a wise one; I don't say that it was excusable. But I was desperate, and I was obliged to do something for self-protection. I instructed Jordan to hog tie Zadoc Chutter in his own bed, so that I could be sure that he would listen to me until I had got done talking. And I proposed to have those papers, Doctor Bingham!" Stewart's voice broke into a snarl. "It was man and man that night! He proposed to blister my soul in order to enjoy himself; I proposed to blister his feet with a candle flame until he told me where those papers were hidden."

The governor studied the doctor's face with keen gaze.

"I haven't much to be proud of in this life, have I, Doctor Bingham? I'm not offering any excuses. I would have fought an honest enemy in a more decent manner. But when it's jackal against jackal," he cried bitterly, "the code of decency doesn't play much of a part.

"Jordan went into that house, and I waited outside. In a few minutes he came out, staggering like a drunken man. And when I was able to get him straightened out so that he could talk, he told me that he found Chutter dead on the floor, with his face all beaten in.

"And then Jordan ran in one direction, and I ran in the other, and I was lost in the fields until you came along with that lantern.

"Doctor Bingham, I'm still going to be frank with you. I don't believe that Lemuel Jordan killed Zadoc Chutter. But I'm going to confess that I don't know for sure. He was in the house for some time alone with Chutter. They may have got into some kind of a mix-up. Jordan might have been

surprised to find the man up and dressed, as he was. If Chutter attacked him, Jordan would have fought back. Jordan hated Chutter, and was eager to serve me. When those big men, like Jordan, let their temper get away from them they don't stop to think—they don't know what they're doing. They wade in. I have since argued and pleaded with Jordan to tell me the exact truth. He insists that he found Chutter dead. It may be true; it may be his story to protect himself. And it may be"—his excellency's tone became grave, and his voice was husky—"it may be that I am accessory before the fact in the murder of Zadoc Chutter."

"That may be so," admitted the doctor. "But I must inform you, governor, that in my opinion it's too obvious an explanation of the Chutter mystery. You were quite near the house, weren't you, when Jordan was inside?"

"I came near enough, so that I might hear him when he called for me."

"And you heard no sound of a rifle shot?"

"Certainly not. After my brother, Alanson, came to me and reported what you said about the manner of Chutter's death, I felt encouraged to talk as I have talked to-night. I determined to hand over to you what facts I had."

"And I hope you perceive that your decision was a wise one, your excellency. Half truths and unsatisfied suspicions are dangerous between men."

"I want to say a word about suspicion, Doctor Bingham. You do not suspect now, do you, that my brother is the owner of that rifle? The Stewarts have never lied to each other, no matter what other faults they may have. His sacred word to me is that he found the rifle tucked in one of those holes in the wall."

"My statement in regard to the rifle is that it is the weapon, undoubtedly,

which did for the man who was found dead in the Chutter house. And doesn't it strike you, Governor Stewart, that when we come to that dead man, or rather the identity of that dead man, we approach the real mystery in the Chutter case?"

"The mystery has cleared up considerably in my mind since I have talked with you," stated the governor. "My opinion is that, after all the years, Zebulon Chutter decided that he would be dying pretty soon, and he decided to come back and have it out with Zadoc Chutter this side of tophet. There's no telling what limitations will be imposed on the settling of grudges beyond the grave."

"I think it is safe to assume that Zebulon Chutter did come back to Monmouth, sir. I believe he came into my camp. I found a newspaper in an upper room of the Chutter house with Zebulon Chutter's name on its margin."

"Then he has got hold of those papers, Doctor Bingham. My brother has been into that house night after night and has hunted—and you know what risks he took. It nigh broke my heart to-night to take that stand against him. He has been willing to sacrifice everything for me. He is sure that I have made a mistake in letting you in, as I have done."

"Governor Stewart, you have not made a mistake," insisted the doctor firmly. "By what you have told me, you have cleared your brother of all the suspicions I held. Things that I thought were facts are now shown to be shadows—and you held up the light which exposed them. I will go to your brother in the morning and explain to him that I know now what his interest in the case was. How does Jordan's case stand at present?"

"Appeal has been entered on exceptions. In my opinion, as a lawyer, a new trial will be granted by the law court on the exceptions based on the

judge's charge to the jury. He practically demanded a verdict of guilty."

"That's right, governor. Poor Jordan made a bad showing in court."

"If the law court goes against him, I'll pardon him, even if I resign my office ten minutes afterward," said the chief executive. "I reckon that he and I, both of us, will have been punished enough for what we wanted to do and didn't do."

Doctor Bingham rose suddenly, and went to the corner where the governor had hung his visitor's hat and coat.

"I beg your pardon for making such a long stop," he apologized. "It is almost midnight."

"But how does this matter stand—what are you going to do, doctor?"

"Secure a few more facts, your excellency."

"But what do you think? What am I going to do in regard to Zebulon Chutter and those papers? If he would beat his own brother's face into pulp to satisfy his grudge, think what he will do to me when he starts in!"

"Pardon me, Governor Stewart, but I do not want to cloud my judgment of facts by discussing theories just now—not after midnight!" He permitted himself the flicker of a smile. "I am reminded that I need to secure another fact from you. Of course, you knew the Chutter brothers very well."

"Intimately."

"I saw each one only briefly and at a disadvantage. They closely resembled each other, did they?"

"It was hard for strangers to tell them apart."

"Did either of them have a distinguishing mark to identify him?"

"Zebulon Chutter had a broken ear; the upper cartilage was doubled down over the lower part of the ear. But both men always wore their hair long to hang over their ears."

"I'm going to say 'Good night' to you, Governor Stewart. I will go on with

this matter as rapidly as possible, and I want to ask you to trust me."

He grasped the governor's hand, and then hurried away.

When he went in to breakfast next morning at Hotel Avon, he stopped for a moment at the table where Alanson Stewart sat. Bingham leaned close and spoke in low tones:

"My talk with Governor Stewart last night was very profitable, sir. There is no further misunderstanding on my part. I apologize for my suspicions. I merely lacked the facts. And I want to add that the governor *is* grateful and he *ought* to be proud and grateful because he has such a loyal brother."

He hurried on to his own table without waiting for Alanson Stewart to recover from his astonishment and make reply.

Soon after breakfast, Doctor Bingham caught a train for Monmouth.

This time he did not bother to sneak into town by a back road.

He left the train at the village, and went directly to the post office. When he inquired at the window, he received a letter. It was from the town in New York State. He found its contents mightily interesting:

DEAR SIR: In reply to yours of recent date, will say that Zebulon Chutter is back home in this town, and has been here all summer and fall, ever since he took a trip in the spring. Have not seen him myself, but get this information from grocery boy who delivers goods at his house. Will state that Mr. Chutter lives alone, and has been confined to his house by lameness ever since he came back here. Am sorry I have no other information about him; but he is a man who does not mix and mate to any extent in this town. Yrs, Rspctly,

HORACE WARD, Postmaster.

Doctor Bingham did not succumb to a desire which was almost irresistible. He turned his back on the road which led out of the village under the elms toward the little schoolhouse in the country district. He went to the village tavern, hurried through his dinner,

and took the first train out of Monmouth. He carried his traveling bag and a long parcel which was wrapped in brown paper—the same baggage which he had brought that day from the city.

Twenty-four hours later, he walked upon the porch of a cottage in the small town in New York State and rapped with businesslike vigor. He waited long. He heard muffled sounds inside the cottage and saw a window curtain waver slightly. He knew that he had been the object of scrutiny from within. He rapped again—he repeatedly rapped—at last with some violence.

Finally he walked along the porch and banged his knuckles against the sash of the window where he had seen the wavering of the curtain.

"You may as well let me in, Mr. Chutter," he called, "unless you want me to start a riot here on this porch in the face and eyes of the neighbors. I have inquired—I know you live here. Let me in!"

He went back to the door and rattled the knob. The knob was turned from within, and the door swung open a few inches; a loop of chain still held it. In the narrow space was framed a stern face with a roll of frosty whiskers under the chin.

"I do not want to buy books, life insurance, or anything else. I do not receive callers."

"Will you please look at me a little more closely, Mr. Chutter?"

"I have looked at you. I do not know you."

"Is your name Zebulon Chutter?"

"Yes," declared the man inside, without flicker of the eyelids or change in his expression.

Bingham drew a crumpled and folded newspaper from his pocket.

"Your name is on this newspaper, Mr. Zebulon Chutter. It was picked up in a house where a murder had been committed."

"Bosh! How does that connect me with a murder case?"

"I will explain after you let me in where we can talk quietly."

"You are not coming in, sir."

"Yes, I am, Mr. Chutter," declared the man on the porch. "You can either let me in and we'll talk the matter over privately, or I'll come back here with an officer of the law, and then the matter will not be private. Take your choice."

The man inside blinked.

Bingham shot another shaft:

"I have some pretty important information for you, Mr. Chutter. I have come straight from the town of Monmouth."

The man within hesitated, and then he lifted the chain plug from its socket, and the door swung wide. Doctor Bingham walked in, his bag and the long parcel in his hands.

Chutter led the way to the sitting room, leaning on a cane and limping in exaggerated manner.

Once again, as he had done before in the Chutter case, Bingham decided to get in a first blow that was stiff-armed and effective.

"I'm not a mere intruder," he said. "I'm here on business. I owe you back rent on that sugar camp I hired of you. Here's the money!" He pulled bills from his pocket and walked toward Chutter.

The man dropped his cane, and backed away without limping.

"I don't own any sugar camp. You don't owe me rent."

"Yes, I do, Mr. Chutter." He tossed the bills upon a table. "I have also brought you something which belongs to you and which better be put out of the way." He stripped the paper from the long parcel. "It's the gun you used when you shot your brother and pounded his face so that he couldn't be recognized as Zebulon."

He strode to the retreating man and

tried to shove the weapon into the protesting hands.

Bingham had played that trump card with effect that won for him.

Mere accusation might not have prevailed in the case of a man who had nerved himself to meet all accusers. But accusation, coupled with sight of the lethal weapon, was too much for Chutter's nerves. He put his hands to his head, and staggered. He clawed in his hair, and Bingham, who was close to him, found opportunity for quick and illuminating observation.

"I'm merely anticipating your identification, which will be made later in regular form, Mr. Zadoc Chutter."

"I am not Zadoc Chutter!" bawled the man.

"Then how is it that the body buried in Monmouth has Zebulon's broken ear?" demanded Doctor Bingham. "You may smooth down your hair now. I have seen all I need to see, Mr. Zadoc Chutter."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAW AND JUSTICE.

The two men looked at each for a long time, speaking no word.

Chutter sat down.

"Well," he snarled, "what have you got to say?"

"I think I have said enough to open the subject in proper fashion," quietly replied Doctor Bingham. "If you have anything to say, I'll be glad to listen."

"I have nothing to say."

"Very well, Mr. Chutter."

They sat for ten minutes in silence. Bingham exhibited the utmost patience and serenity. His astonishing tactics, his taciturnity, his unwavering stare, were working havoc with the fears and the dreading wonderment of the old man who sat opposite and writhed in his armchair.

"It's a question of money, eh? Well, how much?" asked Chutter, unable to endure the silence longer.

"How much for what?"

"For walking out of here and letting Zadoc Chutter lie in that graveyard in peace."

"You misunderstand my interest in the case, sir. Don't make any more offers of money to me. It's dangerous for you. You understand, don't you?" There was a click in the doctor's voice.

"Well, what is your interest?"

"Finding out the truth of the matter."

"How do you fit in?"

"I was forced onto the jury which convicted Lemuel Jordan. He stands in danger of being executed for the crime of killing you. It is very evident that he did not kill you."

"It's all the same. He deserves to die. He wanted to kill me. He mistook my brother for me. So I went away and let it stand as it was."

"Exactly," said Doctor Bingham, relapsing into silence and studying the face of Chutter with his nerve-racking stare.

The scientist was working out an experiment in psychology. He was allowing his victim to guess, to grapple with his fears, to speculate on how much this person knew who had come to him bringing that gun.

"Are you making any charges against me?" Chutter asked.

The doctor shook his head.

"Then why are you chasing me up?"

"You know why, Mr. Chutter."

"Come! Out with it! Come! Out with it! Say what you've got to say!"

Doctor Bingham made no reply.

"My coming away was my own business. I had a right to leave. I was no good as a witness. I didn't see Jordan shoot my brother."

"I know that."

Chutter stared at his visitor.

"How do you know it?"

The visitor merely kept on staring.

"You couldn't know it. Nobody

could know it. Nobody was there—I was upstairs and I heard—I didn't see."

"You saw Robert Chutter sitting in a corner when you came downstairs. Do you know how long he had been there?"

The old man's pale face matched the hue of his frosty beard. Then the red came into his cheeks.

"How long had he been there? You don't know yourself how long he had been there. What's his evidence worth in court? He is crazy. I can put him into an asylum for the insane on my own testimony. What did he see?"

"I am not allowed to give away the State's evidence, sir. You will hear from him what he saw. He will be put on the stand for the State."

"Look here, my friend, I am not a fool. I followed the trial of that case in the newspapers. Robert Chutter was not a witness—was not named in the case."

"We could afford to wait," returned Bingham.

For another long period, Chutter sat, his fears lashing him.

"The State's evidence! I have sized you now. You're working for that dirty renegade that the fools have elected governor. You're hired by Anse Stewart."

"No," stated Bingham, with convincing serenity. "I am not working for Governor Stewart. I am working for justice." He paused. "And in the name of justice, Mr. Zadoc Chutter, you are going before the court to be tried for the murder of your brother. And you know exactly why you should be tried."

Chutter got up and walked the floor. In his excitement, he forgot his former pretense of lameness.

"Why are you here trying to bulldoze me in this style? If you've got any facts about me up your sleeve, out with 'em!"

"I am not disclosing State's evidence,

sir, I repeat. I also repeat, you know perfectly well why you should be tried."

The quills shed by a porcupine work their own way into the flesh of the victim. Doctor Bingham sat back in his chair and closed his mouth and allowed his suggestions to wreak their automatic havoc in the soul of the man who knew his own guilt and was guessing at what others might know.

Chutter stamped up and down the room, and at every turn he flashed a look at the silent figure who sat there with the unwinking stare of a basilisk.

"I won't have you looking at me as if I am a murderer," the old man roared, unable to endure this scrutiny any longer. "I have the right on my side. My brother did come back to Monmouth. I'm not denying it."

"And he is there, and you are here under his name and in his house."

"I had my reasons."

"One of them being that you wanted time to work out a plan whereby you could fasten the crime of the murder of Zadoc Chutter upon the governor of the State on top of the other things you proposed to do to him!" Doctor Bingham had decided to experiment a bit outside of proved facts. "I know all about your relations with Anson Stewart, Mr. Chutter. I know what you and he did to your brother years ago. I know about the documents you hold. I don't believe you can tell me anything I don't know."

"You don't know that my brother came back to Monmouth to kill me, do you, you infernal human gimlet?"

"Knowing what good reasons he had, I don't doubt it."

"The doctors had given him a month to live, and he wanted to take me to Tophet along with him. He was going to kill me," raged Chutter, beating the air with his fist, "just when the sweetest time of my life was beginning. I had Anse Stewart where I wanted to have him!" He rolled his lips away

from his teeth. "And the fool came to kill me! The law gives a man the right of self-defense. I used that right. I am not guilty of murder."

"You will find the court a patient listener, sir."

"I'm not going before any court."

"You must."

"Go back into a State where Anse Stewart is governor—whispering in the ear of every judge? Go back and sit in the prisoner's dock and have Anse Stewart grin at me? Never!"

"I say you must! There's a man named Jordan to be considered."

"I suppose you think you're going to take me back!"

"You can go with me quietly."

"And if I don't go?"

"There's a police station three doors up this street."

Chutter became calm, and sat down. He pondered for some moments.

"I think I'll go with you," he said. Then he was silent for a long time, his deep-set eyes fixed on the face of his visitor. In his turn, Doctor Bingham found this scrutiny troublesome.

"You seem to be a pretty level-headed young man," suggested Chutter.

The doctor did not reply.

"You are probably a rather safe young man to handle other folks' business. You seem to know a lot about my business up to date. You may as well know more." He drew a packet from his pocket, and slid it across the table to Bingham. "You can glance at the titles of those documents. You may read them if you want to waste the time. Or you take my word for it that they are all the papers in the case of Stewart and myself and my brother."

"I will take your word for it, sir."

"Do you want to put them into your pocket? The first thing they'll do they'll search me and take away my papers. These papers would hang me—would prejudice my story of self-defense—and that story is true."

"I prefer to leave the papers with you, sir."

Chutter took back the packet, and tossed it into the blazing open fire.

"It's an old story—better out of the way and forgotten, now that conditions have changed," he said.

Doctor Bingham wondered what his own responsibility in that matter might be—but he was too late to interfere; Chutter poked the papers deep into the blaze with the tongs.

"As I have said, they will search me for papers—and I don't care about my private affairs being canvassed too much. I haven't made any friends during my life, young man, and I must ask you, a stranger, to help me a bit in this thing. Strangers are usually more reliable than friends." He drew a paper from his pocket. "This," he explained, tapping it with thin forefinger, "is my will. It leaves all I have to my niece, Laura Chutter. You don't know her, but I will say that she is a good girl and deserves what I shall leave her. I have left to Robert Chutter a dollar, and have made Laura his guardian; he's a fool and doesn't know enough to handle money."

Doctor Bingham leaped out of his chair, and hurried around the table. His suspicions were keen.

"Mr. Chutter," he said firmly, "you must excuse me, but I am obliged to search you."

The old man smiled at him.

"Think I'm settling affairs so that I can commit suicide, eh?" he queried bluntly. "Well, search!"

He stood up, and held his arms over his head.

But Bingham found not even a pen-knife in the old man's pockets.

There were no drawers in the table at which he sat, and there was no table cover to hide a weapon.

"I hope you're satisfied, because I don't want you to suspect me of being

a coward. There's a man passing. Open the window and call him in."

Bingham obeyed without losing sight of Chutter. But the latter stood in the middle of the room, smiling at him.

The passer-by came in and greeted Chutter.

"You think you know me, but you don't," stated the old man.

The other blinked his astonishment.

"You knew my twin brother Zebulon when he lived in this house. But that makes no difference. Sit down until I write a few lines."

Bingham and the new arrival waited patiently and in silence until Chutter had finished.

"Listen to this!" he admonished them.

"I, Zadoc Chutter, of Monmouth, on this day and date do declare that in the evening of the seventeenth day of May last I did, in self-defense, kill my brother, Zebulon Chutter, in my house in aforesaid town.

(Signed) ZADOC CHUTTER."

He laid the paper on the table.

"You two men sign that as witnesses," he directed.

Bingham owned to himself that he was puzzled and apprehensive. But he signed the paper, and the other witness followed suit.

"Both of you sit down again for a moment," invited the old man. He took his stand in the center of the room.

"As I remember our little conversation when you hired that sugar camp last spring, you said you were a doctor."

"I am, sir."

"Are you pretty well posted?"

"I believe so, Mr. Chutter."

"Now, according to your judgment, how much time would be required for a salol capsule to be dissolved in the human stomach?"

Doctor Bingham grabbed the arms of his chair, and started to rise, but Chutter put up protesting palm.

"There's no need of becoming ex-

cited, Doctor Bingham. I have asked you a plain, professional question."

"In some cases ten minutes—rarely over fifteen. It may be even sooner than ten minutes." He stammered. He felt a sense of something impending. But Chutter stood there, calm and smiling.

"Ten minutes or fifteen! Or even sooner!" He pulled out his watch and held it in front of his face. "Gentlemen, I must be a tough old cuss. I swallowed a capsule with prussic acid in it more than a quarter of an hour ago."

Doctor Bingham came out of his chair.

"I have had that little resource in the corner of my vest pocket for a good many months, doctor. If I were in your place, I would not bother to rush around for antidotes. Excuse me if I don't go back with you to be grinned at by Anse Stewart. Sit down! Sit down! Just observe how easy and convenient it is for a man to die when there's nothing left to live for!"

And while the two men stared at him a quick spasm knotted his countenance, and he crumpled down before them—dead!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GIRL IN THE DOORWAY.

Doctor Bingham knelt after a time and composed the limbs and closed the staring eyes of the body which had contained the unhappy being named Zadoc Chutter.

He glanced up at his fellow witness, who was trembling and mumbling and clucking in his fright.

"This is a sad case, my friend," said Bingham. "I hope you'll use good judgment in what you say about this thing."

"But he ain't dead—he can't be dead!" protested the man. "Just a

minute ago he was talking to us—looking happy! If you're a doctor, why don't you bring him to?"

Bingham shook his head, and rose.

"I will stay here," he told the man. "Of course, you are acquainted in this village. Hurry out and send in a medical examiner."

When that gentleman came, accompanied by the witness who had viewed with Bingham the death of Chutter, Doctor Bingham stated frankly the essentials of the affair and exhibited the witnessed writing. Furthermore, Doctor Bingham was able to establish his own identity and the fact of his connection with the university.

The way was promptly and politely smoothed for him, and within a few hours he was on his way back to Monmouth with the body.

Telegrams, guardedly phrased, preceded him.

He did not stop over at Monmouth. He stepped off the train only long enough to see that the undertaker was present to assume his responsibility. Then he went on to the State capital.

Again, in the evening, he walked up the long hill to the statehouse, knowing that his telegram had gone ahead to open all doors to him.

And the door of the executive chamber was opened by the governor himself. His excellency was alone.

"Do you mean——" he began, his hands trembling.

"I mean that there is no more mystery in the Chutter case, sir. I have been examining my conscience in the matter, Governor Stewart. I have had plenty of time to do so. What I have done, I have done! Perhaps I went too far in some things. But I have the written confession of Zadoc Chutter that he killed his brother. I place it in your hands. The papers are destroyed. I saw them burned. As to the rights and the wrongs in this affair, I have no comments to make."

His excellency sat down at his desk and examined the paper, the sheet crackling in his shaking hands.

"Tell me," he entreated, "how did it come about?"

In the silence of the dim chamber, Doctor Bingham told the story, wasting no words. He spoke crisply, even curtly.

"Therefore, Jordan goes free," he said at the end.

"Jordan goes free," agreed the governor. "I will attend to the matter myself and bring this paper to the attention of the attorney general. It is a business for the court, not for myself and the council—seeing that the case has gone to the law court on exceptions. Jordan will be released at once."

"Then that settles the matter, Governor Stewart," said the doctor, rising.

"But as to you and your work on the case! Sit down, please!"

"I wish you would consider that what I have done has been done by me for purely personal reasons, sir. If you wish to consider my feelings, you will make no further mention of that phase of the affair."

"Poor old Zade Chutter has squared his debts. I don't know what he will be asked to pay over yonder, but he squared 'em here—when he stood up there in front of you—as men look at those things," said Stewart. He stared down at the carpet, twirling his thumbs, one over the other. "And I'm still in debt!"

He whirled on Doctor Bingham.

"What am I going to do? You may not think so, after what I have told you, but I have a little self-respect left in me. It is a mighty stunted little plant, doctor. It has been trodden into the dirt. But I had begun to nurse it and to try to straighten out the petals." He was wistful. "I wanted to make up for some things of the past. What am I going to do?"

"I don't know, Governor Stewart."

"I owe Zeb Chutter's children money. How can I give it to them?"

"If I were in your place, I should not try to do that, Governor Stewart. Zadoc Chutter left a will. He leaves all his property to his brother's children. The will states where the property will be found."

"It will ease my conscience, Doctor Bingham."

"There are certain things, governor, that cannot well be undone. I know Laura Chutter." His eyes grew bright, and a flush came into his cheeks in spite of the restraint he had put upon himself. "If you offer money to her, it will seem like charity, and she will resent it. Zadoc Chutter's property is carefully scheduled in his will. You cannot disguise your offering."

"But I must do something," groaned the man in the big chair. "My conscience is awake! I cannot get any comfort out of being governor of this State while I am damning myself inside as a thief and a renegade. I'm going to be afraid to look decent folks in the face."

Doctor Bingham pulled on his overcoat, and was silent.

"You are not trying to help me," complained the governor. "You think I am being punished as I deserve, I suppose."

"I am keeping my thoughts carefully off your affairs, Governor Stewart. I have been too much of a sinner in my own way to be qualified to judge others. Just now I am simply and earnestly thanking the good God because He has set me on the straight road to decency and happiness!"

He walked out of the executive chamber, paying no heed to the governor's appeals that he remain. It was plain that his excellency did not want to be left alone with his thoughts and his conscience.

That straight road to happiness seemed to lie in the direction of Mon-

mouth, for Doctor Bingham traveled that way as soon as possible. He had sent a letter ahead of him, and Laura Chutter was at the railroad station when he alighted from the train. There are confessions and pledges that words merely profane; she gave him both hands, and their eyes met. Then they walked away under the stars which sparkled between the bare branches of the elms, and they did not speak to each other.

When they were well out of the village, on their way, he gave her a folded paper.

"It is your uncle's will," he told her. "It gives you all. I am glad for your sake."

She tucked the paper carelessly into her muff.

"And why not glad for your own sake?" she asked after a long silence.

He stammered when he tried to reply. He did not finish his sentences. He seemed to be unable to phrase an answer. This frank question set all his emotions into a tumult.

She stopped short, and faced him.

"Alvah Bingham, look at me!"

He obeyed.

"Now what have you to say to me?"

"I love you," he whispered.

"I knew it," she returned in soft tones. "Don't think that I am bold and forward, please. But we can't

keep our feelings dammed back forever. I want to be able to tell you how much I love you. But you were the one to say so first."

She made one step toward him, and lifted her face so that the stars lighted its piquant beauty. He put out his arms, and then dropped them.

"Wait! Wait just a few moments," he pleaded. "It is silly. But don't think I am strange. Wait! All folks who are in love as much as I am do queer things. Wait!"

They walked on, and she gave him wondering side glances.

When they were at the gate of the little cottage, he stopped.

"Please go and open the door and stand there with the light behind you," he entreated, and she obeyed.

Then he called to her from the gate in low tones which thrilled her.

"My own girl, I stood here one night and said 'good-by.' I looked up at you, and the light made a halo about your head. I went away into the blackness, loving you so much that my heart ached; I was hungry for you. And I dreamed of a time when you would stand in that open door once more and put out your arms and say, 'Come!'"

She smiled, and spread her arms to him.

And he hastened to her, and they passed in together out of the night.

"Still-Going-North Stanley"

COMPLETE NOVEL
By HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS
in the next POPULAR

Stories of the Legion

By H. De Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Gold Trail," "The Buccaneers," Etc.

When France found herself faced with the problem of Algeria—that is to say, with the problem of infinite wastes of sand inhabited by a foe mobile and ungraspable as the desert wind—she formed the Legion. She called to the wastrels, the criminals, the despairing, and the impoverished—and they came. Men of genius, street sweepers, artists, doctors, engineers—it would be difficult to touch a profession, a race or a grade of intellect not to be found in the Legion. All the genius that Civilization has turned away from her doors is here at command—for a cent a day.

I.—CHOC

THE first rays of the morning sun were stealing up the palm-bordered roads toward Sidi-bel-Abbès, above whose ramparts the minaret of the great mosque blazed white in the sky. Eighty miles from Oran on the coast, set away in the vague, yellow, illimitable wastes of the desert, the headquarters of the Foreign Legion, Sidi-bel-Abbès is surely one of the strangest cities on earth.

It was built by the Foreign Legion; it is swept and garnished by the Foreign Legion; it is held against the Arabs by the Foreign Legion. At night the electric lights round the band stand of the Foreign Legion on the Place Sadi Carnot blaze against the Algerian stars, while the muezzins on the balconies of the minarets keep watch over Islam, and their voices send north, south, east, and west the cry that was old in the time of Sindbad the Sailor!

All' il Allah—God is great.

But the marvel of Sidi-bel-Abbès is not the fact that here Edison and Strauss face Mahommed in the form

of his priests, nor the flower gardens blooming on the face of the desert, nor the roads along which the Arabs stalk and the automobiles dash. The marvel of the Sidi-bel-Abbès lies in the Legion.

When France found herself faced with the problem of Algeria—that is to say, the problem of infinite wastes of sand inhabited by a foe mobile and ungraspable as the desert wind—she formed the Legion.

She called to the wastrels, the criminals, the despairing, and the impoverished of every country and every city—and they came.

Men of genius, street sweepers, artists, doctors, engineers—it would be difficult to touch a profession, a race, or a grade of intellect not to be found in the Legion.

General de Négrier said that the Legion could do anything—from the building of a bridge, to the writing of an opera, to the painting of a picture—all the genius that civilization has

turned away from its doors is here at command—for a halfpenny a day.

The sun had touched the upper border of the huge, blank eastern wall of the Legion's barracks, and it was still a few minutes before reveille, when, in room No. 6 of the tenth company, the garde chambre for the day slipped from his bed, stretched and yawned noiselessly, and glanced round him.

The room was like the ward of a hospital, and the likeness was made no less striking by the card above each of the twenty beds, a white card, setting out each man's name and number.

Radoub's number, as shown by the card on the bed he had just vacated, was 7083.

He was a small and wiry-looking individual, with the face of a gamin; that is to say, the face of a child who is a jester, who may be a cutthroat, and who is certainly, and above all things, a Parisian.

Radoub had, in fact, been an apache by profession, and Monsieur Lépine had given him the choice between a penitentiary and the Legion. He chose the Legion, because, as he said, he liked the name better.

He was quite aware that life in the Legion was worse than life in a penitentiary, and he did not care a button about the social difference; he liked the name better, that was all. He was an artist.

He stood now, for a second, gazing at the others, nineteen men stretched in all the attitudes of slumber. Germans, French, an Englishman, an American, a Greek, and a Russian. Then, shuffling on some clothes, he left the room silently as the shadow of a moving cat.

In a moment he was back with a huge jug of steaming coffee, and, as he entered, shouting to the others to wake up, the reveille came from the barrack yard. The reveille of the French army

that sounds every morning across France, to find its echo in Algeria:

Ra tât tat ta. Rat tat tat ta,
Rat tat tat ta ta ta ta
Ra tat tat ta. Rat tat tat ta,
Rat tat tat ta ta ta ta

In a moment the room was astir. Between the reveille and the muster in the barrack yard there was only half an hour, yet in that half hour the coffee was drunk, the men dressed, the beds made, and the floor swept, Radoub yelling to the others to hurry up, hurry up, hurry up, as it was his duty to put the completing touch to the dusting and cleaning and fetch the water.

Then he came tearing down the stairs after the rest and out in the barrack yard, half cut in two by the blaze of the six-o'clock sun, and under a sky blue as a cornflower, the long, long lines of white-clad men fell in, while the echoes roused to the bugles.

Then, led by the bugles, the columns wheeled out of the barrack gates, making for the great drill ground, where the arms were piled and the men, in square formation now, were exercised at the double.

It was terrific; with the sun blaze now in their faces, with the sun beating now on their backs, and, now, with their sides to a furnace door, round and round and round the great parade ground they went, the dust rising and hanging about them in a haze.

Ten minutes, twenty minutes, thirty minutes, and then the thunder and movement ceased and the Légionnaires, released for a moment after their first exercise of the day, broke into groups, cigarettes were lit, and the dust-hazed air filled with the fumes of caporal.

Radoub, though sweating, showed little signs of stress; he had lungs of leather. Not so Casmir, a man in his company to whom he was talking.

Casmir was a bitter-looking individual who had once been a government clerk: His white uniform was

clinging to him with perspiration, and he was just getting his wind back.

The two men were walking up and down rapidly, for it is impossible to stand still after half an hour of the double.

"Well," said Casmir, "this finishes me. This is the last time. I'm off."

He had been threatening for the last week or so to make a bolt.

Radoub, a fountain of wisdom in most things practical, had always dissuaded him from this fatal course. The man who tries to escape from the grip of the Legion is, in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases, brought back, and, when he is brought back, Heaven help him.

"Take my advice," said Radoub, "and leave that alone. No good. Stick to it as I have done, and make the best of it. I have been at it four years and ten months to-morrow, and in another two months I walk out like a gentleman."

"Well," said Casmir, "I have been in it only six months, and in another twelve hours—well, you will see."

"Have your way," said Radoub; "you are a fool. Do you think a clever man like myself would not have cut and run years ago had there been a decent chance? I weighed it all ages ago. The chance is too small and the punishment too big. It's impossible to drill sense into a head like yours, else I'd say, 'Look at me. If running away is not good enough for me, it's not good enough for you.'"

"All the same, I'm going to do it," said Casmir.

"Then do it and be——"

The bugle was sounding "Fall in," and the morning exercises went on. At eleven o'clock, sweating, dusty, fagged out, but cheerful, the vast regiment of Légionnaires, wheeling in column formation to the sound of drums as well as bugles, marched back to barracks.

As they passed through the gates, Radoub flung a word to a small and dusty figure that was hanging about by the gate. It was Choc.

He had picked up Choc one night, a year ago, in the town. A dog that seemed compounded of all the known breeds of dogs—with the exception of the noblest.

Choc was dust-colored, his hair stood in permanent bristle upon his shoulders, and he was terrific in battle; he had fought everything in Sidi-bel-Abbès and in the negro village that lies by the parade ground of the Foreign Legion, and, without any manner of doubt, his family tree, had it been worked back, would have disclosed an Irish terrier somewhere in the not remote distance. But the fighting qualities of Choc made less appeal to Radoub than the fact that he was an out-and-out blackguard, an expert thief, an apache.

I have said that Choc was hanging about the gate. That was the impression he gave one. It was not the honest waiting of a dog for its master; it was the waiting of a confederate for his mate at a public-house door or the corner of a race course. There was no tail-wagging. As the column passed in, the dust-colored one sniffing about did not even cast an eye at Radoub. Then, when the last files had passed the gateway, he slunk in after them and hung about in the courtyard till Radoub, who was a friend of the cook, came out of the cookhouse with a bone for him.

This happened every day. Choc, who slept in some hole or corner of the town best known to himself, paid two daily visits to the barracks, at eleven and six.

At eleven o'clock he got a bone or, by chance, a bit of meat; at six o'clock he appeared to accompany his master into the town.

At six o'clock every day the work of

the Legion is over, and you may see the Légionnaires, spick and span, streaming through the barrack gates to the town, there to amuse themselves as best they can. They have no money. Literally no money. The halfpenny a day paid them by government scarcely serves for tobacco; they have to buy their own soap, mostly, and washing is a big item in a regiment where white uniforms of washable material are worn, and must be worn speckless.

Radoub had taught Choc a lot of tricks. In the Place Sadi Carnot of an evening, with the band playing a march, you might have seen Choc, on his hind legs, marching up and down before his master. Visitors to Sidi-bel-Abbès, attracted by the animal's queer appearance and his tricks, would question Radoub about him, and the result was nearly always profitable to Radoub. It was said that Choc stole cigarettes for him in the native quarter of the town, sneaking packets from the Moslem traders' stalls while Radoub held the latter in light conversation, and not only cigarettes; but articles more bulky and more valuable.

To-day, Radoub, having given Choc his bone and dismissed him, was turning to enter the barracks, when he ran into the arms of Corporal Klein.

"Ah, there's that dog of yours again," said Klein. "I was looking for you to tell you. The colonel says he has had enough of him, and he's to be shot."

Radoub swore the great oath of the Legion—which is unprintable.

"Shot—and what for?"

"Biting the sentry. It was last night, after you had come back from the town. Seguer was on duty, and the beast stuck about the gate, and Seguer tried to make him go, and got bitten in the foot, right through his boot."

"He must have kicked him," said Radoub.

"Who knows. Not only that, but the colonel says he has been having

reports about you and him and your doings in the town; says that the Legion has enough blackguards in it without enlisting four-footed ones, and there you are; the order is promulgated, the dog has to go."

"Catch him, then," said Radoub.

Klein, a big man, in spite of his name, came toward Choc, who was busy with his bone. Radoub whistled shrilly between his teeth, and the dog, picking up his treasure, started for the barrack gate. Flying pebbles and dust marked his path, and he was gone.

Klein laughed. He was a good-natured man, a friend of Radoub's, and he had no grudge against the dog.

"All the same," said he, "the dog has to go, you know what it is. The order has been given, and once the order has been given there is no staying it."

Radoub knew quite well what it was. He knew the colonel and he knew the Legion.

Choc might evade capture, but caught he would be sooner or later.

He said nothing, however. The bugle call for soup rang through the yard, and, as he was orderly of his room, he had to rush off to the kitchen, from where, in a moment, he returned, bearing a steaming can for his men; then he had to return for bread.

No one noticed the least change in him, and if there had been a change in him, nobody would have bothered. The Legion never bothers about anything, and the most monstrous happenings pass with scarcely a comment from the hearers and beholders.

All that afternoon Radoub was engaged on scout-patrol maneuvers, and, at six o'clock, spick and span, he left the barrack yard for the town.

Choc was waiting for him at the gate, but not close to it. The sentry having his orders, had tried to lure him in, but Choc, alarmed by this unaccustomed civility, had removed himself a full hundred yards away, where he was

sitting, with his stump of a tail sticking out straight behind him.

He followed Radoub.

But Radoub did not make direct for town. He skirted the ramparts till he came to the western side, where the great, rough, yellow wall was blazing in the light of the sinking sun; then, getting into the ditch, he followed the wall a certain distance, stopped, glanced up and down the ditch to make sure that no one was observing him, and then drew a stone from the wall, disclosing a hole, in which was seated, like a squat gnome, a little, fat linen bag.

This was his cache. The money he had collected by one means or another during the last four years and ten months. It was a fair sum, partly in gold, partly in silver, and he had intended it for that day, now only two months distant, when, to use his own words, he would walk out of the Legion like a gentleman. He was going to use it for a different purpose now, and placing the bag in his pocket, without troubling to close the cache, he turned and, followed by the dog, came back along the ditch.

Stars like the points of needles were piercing the pansy-colored sky when Radoub and his companions reached the Place Sadi Carnot. The Place was crowded; Légionnaires, visitors, and townfolk crowding around the band stand, some seated, others standing about in groups. The warm air was filled with the scents of jasmine and garlic, the African earth, cigarette and cigar smoke, all vague and blended to form the smell of Sidi-bel-Abbès *en fête*.

Then the electric lights blazed, and the band struck up. They were playing the "Sambre et Meuse," that splendid march of the French army, spirited enough almost to raise the slain, but Radoub did not beat time with his foot, nor, when Choc glanced at him, did he

give the dog the signal to start his tricks.

He walked about for a while, showing himself to his companions, then he disappeared from the Place, and, followed by the dog, sought the native streets.

Sidi-bel-Abbès is slashed across by two great boulevards running north and south, and east and west. Here you find plate-glass windows and Paris jewelry, motor cars, cocottes, American women in blue veils. Paris, Vienna, Berlin, London, and New York all represented by some fragment of their social life, just as in the Legion they are represented, each, by some form of the universal diseases that prey on society.

Behind these gay boulevards you find the real Sidi-bel-Abbès.

You walk into the country of Islam. Passing through the narrow bazaars, the moon above your head becomes the moon that lit the three Calenders, and the lamps that light the gloom of the booths the lamps of Aladdin.

The Légionnaires swarm here, yet their blue-and-red dress uniform does not detract from the Oriental charm; they have about them some subtle touch of Africa that blends with the surroundings.

Radoub, followed by his companion, passed through several of the narrow streets till he reached an alley, where, at a door set in the wall, he knocked.

The door opened, and he went in, leaving Choc to wait for him outside, seated on the ground. Arab dogs came down the alley, saw the stranger, advanced, burbling and bristling, recognized him, and passed on; the rising moon laid a pale finger on the wall top, and from far away across the faint noises of the city came the cry of the priest from the balcony of the minaret calling the faithful to prayer; and now a window opened somewhere, and the laughter of a girl, the tinkle tankle of

a guitar, and a snatch of song blew away on the night wind and then snapped off to the closing of the case-ment.

This was the Spanish quarter of the Moslem town, and perhaps the wickedest, outside the jurisdiction of the Bureau Arabe, and visited only by the shadiest characters among the European population of the place.

Twenty minutes passed, and then the door opened and a man came out. He was dressed in mufti, but the alteration did not deceive Choc. He knew his master at once, and, rising, followed him down the alley into the street.

Radoub had made up his mind to escape from the Legion. It was the maddest act of his life.

First of all, he was not an ordinary Légionnaire, but a criminal serving for rehabilitation. If he managed to escape, he would have to begin his life over again without papers. It would be impossible for him to find work in France; he must go to England or some other country where papers were not required. Then, again, he had only to wait two short months and he would secure his rehabilitation and be able to leave the Legion and obtain work.

Though he had started in life as an apache, common sense had been talking to him for the last two years or so, pointing out that a franc made by robbery is not worth two sous made by work. The rate of exchange is always against the criminal; so appalling is it that one may wonder at any man with an ounce of brains doing business on such ruinous terms. Radoub had recognized this, and he had determined, on finding himself his own man again, to take to honest ways.

He was now ruining all the plans he had made for that future so nearly in his grasp. Throwing everything away—for a dog.

As a matter of fact, there was no struggle involved in the giving up of

his plans. Cold plans for the future, dictated by common sense, did not stand for a moment before the warm desire to keep the dog and flout authority. Choc was his mate, and he was not going to lose him.

Passing a shop where viands were sold, he bought two sausages and put them in his pocket, then he walked on, striking toward the European quarter.

The band was still playing in the Place Sadi Carnot, and the faint sound of it came on the warm, perfumed wind.

To Radoub it seemed a month ago since he had left the Place, and it seemed extraordinary to hear the band at it still.

But he had little time to think of anything except his objective, and that was Oran, eighty miles away.

There is a railway between Sidi-bel-Abbès and Oran; that is to say, a trap for runaway Légionnaires. Radoub was not such a fool as to use the railway or even to walk along the embankments. Time was of no matter to him. The pursuit would be after him before he could reach Oran even by rail; he had to trust entirely to his disguise and to luck. He recognized that Choc would be his main difficulty; he could not disguise Choc.

He had lit a cigarette, and he passed along to the city gates without let or hindrance; a bourgeois taking an evening stroll with his dog excited no comment. At the gates it was the same, and, walking with a leisurely manner, with his hands in his pockets, he found the road to Oran and struck along it. It lay before him white in the moonlight, and, beyond the gardens of the town, on either side, stretched the sand wastes and rocks of the miserable desert that in daylight is yellow, parched, sun-bitten, and murderous in its desolation. A few stunted palms broke the sky line on the right, while on the left could be seen the lights of

the railway and the furnace-lit smoke of a train just coming in from Oran. Radoub, noting these, looked up and down the road; to right, to left, not a soul was there to be seen. Then, calling to Choc, he struck into his stride.

Nearly five years of life in the Legion had rendered him almost impervious to weariness in marching. Four kilometers an hour is the regulation pace in full marching order and laden with rifle, ammunition, and equipment. Forty kilometers a day is the minimum on active service.

Five miles or so from Sidi-bel-Abbès, a mounted police patrol passed Radoub without halting and with scarcely a glance at him, but they were going toward the town, and would know nothing of his escape.

Then, thinking things over in his mind, he reflected that the fact of his escape would be still unknown even at the barracks, where it was just turning-in time. *Légionnaires* sometimes out-stopped their leave. The pursuit would not be on his heels till to-morrow morning, when, definitely declared absent, his description would be circulated, right to Oran.

But this did not incline him to slacken his pace. He kept on steadily, till he had reached a point some ten miles from the town, then he took his seat by the wayside, took the sausages, which were wrapped up in a sheet of the *Journal d'Oran*, from his pocket, and divided one with Choc. Then, noticing a prickly pear bush growing near by, he cut some of the fruit and carefully peeled it.

It was their first meal in the desert, and they had four, for it was not till the morning of the third day of his escape that Radoub entered Oran.

II.

His adventures during that journey of eighty miles or less would fill a bril-

liant chapter of fiction. He was stopped and spoken to by a police patrol and escaped suspicion of being a deserter by assuming the rôle of a deaf mute. He joined a band of wandering Arabs, and, suspecting their good intentions, escaped from them. This little escape within an escape caused him more trouble than any other incident of the journey. Lastly, by means of a bribe of two francs, he managed to enter Oran in a cart loaded with esparto grass and drawn by two mules, thus avoiding the attentions of the gentleman at the gate of the town.

There was a rat in the cart, as well, and the maddening fumes of it surged through Choc's brain, but he did not lose his reason or his self-command, and held his place, crouching beside his master, though shivering in every muscle and thrilling in every nerve.

The driver managed to unload his passengers in a back yard, unobserved, and Radoub, with Choc at his heels, found himself in the streets of Oran with nothing but the sea between himself and freedom.

He had little fear of detection in these bustling streets, where every imaginable sort of business seemed going forward to the clatter of every European tongue.

Tall, white-clad Arabs stalked along, and barelegged Arab women, with faces veiled; negro porters, with glistening skins and red fez caps; Spaniards, Portuguese, Frenchmen, Italians, Spahis back from Senegal, sailors up from the warships in the harbor, and English travelers just arrived, formed the crowd through which Radoub made his way, with Choc at his heels, and not the faintest notion in his head as to what course he was going to pursue.

The obvious course was the mail boat that runs between Oran and Marseilles, but there were difficulties in the way. The boats were sure to be watched for deserters. Mail boats and - railway

trains were simply roads to arrest. He had known and heard of numerous cases of escaped men caught either at the Oran railway station or on board the *General Chanzy*, or one of the other boats of the Algerian line.

He had an idea in his head of boarding some small trading vessel and either stowing himself away or making friends with the captain, and he was taking his way toward the harbor, with a view to this, when, at a street corner, he ran into the arms of Casmir. It was Casmir who recognized him, and not he Casmir. For Casmir had dyed his face with walnut juice, and, the suit of gray jean that he wore being too large for him, he had stuffed himself out at the waist with old newspapers, giving himself a corporation that was the very best disguise in the world. He looked like a disreputable old Spaniard.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Radoub. "Casmir!"

Then he burst into a laugh. Only such a short time ago he had been warning Casmir, on the parade ground of the Legion, against running away!

They walked along the street together, and Casmir explained matters.

He had run away, it seemed, on the same night that Radoub had made his evasion, had boldly taken the train for Oran, and, with the good luck that comes with daring, had found the matter perfectly easy.

"I was never stopped or questioned once," said he. "But here it is different. I cannot get across. It seems that they are watching the boats. I went down to the steamboat quay yesterday, and there was an official at the gangway of the boat for Marseilles. He was demanding the papers of all the passengers—the men. To leave this place one must be either a fish or a sea bird, it seems, and I am neither."

"Come into this café, and let us talk," said Radoub.

They entered a shabby café that was

close by, and Radoub called for coffee and food for them both.

"How much money have you?" said he.

"A hundred francs," replied Casmir. "I had a hundred and forty to start with. I had received a money order from a relation for two hundred francs the morning I was talking to you. It cost me sixty francs to get this rig. It was that money order that fixed me in my idea of bolting, and I am beginning to wish now that I had never received it."

"Courage," said Radoub.

He said nothing for a few minutes, and then he began to disclose his plan. There were ships always leaving Oran for the French and Spanish ports. Ship captains of the lesser mercantile marine were venal folk; for eighty francs, say, the pair of them might be able to get a passage on some bark; a place in the hold, on top of the cargo, would do.

"Ah," said Casmir, brightening up, "now you are talking! If any man can do the trick, you can; you have the gift of the gab and a way with you that I have not."

"Well, then," said Radoub, "let's go down to the wharves now, right away, and try and fix up the business."

But Casmir demurred.

"There is no use in our going about the streets together," said he, "for, if one is caught, the other will be nabbed, too. I'll meet you here in an hour if you will go and try and do the business. The café won't run away, and you may be very sure that I won't, either."

Radoub saw at once the reason in this, and off he started, leaving Choc with Casmir.

Choc was fond of Casmir, who had often fed him with scraps; all the same, Radoub borrowed a piece of string from the dingy waiter and tied the end of it round the dog's neck.

"That will give you something to hold

him by," said he, "in case he's up to any of his tricks."

Then he paid the bill and started off, leaving Casmir seated and holding the dog by the string.

There are two harbors at Oran. An outer anchorage, not very good in rough weather, unless the wind is off the land, and a small, inner harbor, a little hole of a place, always full because of its small size.

Radoub came along the quay side, walking in a leisurely manner and smoking a cigarette. Beside the warships in the harbor there were two small, bark-rigged vessels, one discharging grain, the other with closed hatches and evidently a full cargo.

Radoub was walking toward the gangplank of the latter, when a hand fell on his arm, and, turning, he found himself face to face with Sergeant Pelletier, of the military police of Sidi-bel-Abbès.

"*That's all right,*" said the sergeant, releasing Radoub's arm and placing his hand on his shoulder in a fatherly way. "And you may be thankful your uniform was returned. Whoever sold you this rig sent it back, left it at the barrack gates, done up in a parcel. *Mon Dieu!* Radoub, but I would never have thought it of you, to play a fool's game like this! A smart Légionnaire like you, time nearly expired and all. What made you?"

Radoub laughed.

The game had gone against him, and there was no use in grumbling.

His mind was engaged less on the business of arrest than on the problem

of what he should do about Casmir and Choc.

To regain possession of Choc, he would have to give Casmir away, and Choc being condemned to death, there was no use in regaining possession of him. So he did nothing.

He lit a cigarette, and, walking side by side with Pelletier, he went to the station, and twenty minutes later he was in the train returning to Sidi-bel-Abbès.

At the barracks, he was placed promptly under arrest, and he marched off to his cell with that terrible light-heartedness which is a legacy of the Legion, inherited from crime.

As no single item of his uniform was lost, he only received a month's imprisonment, and, at the end of the month, the Legion was marched off south, where the Arabs were kicking up a dust, and hard fighting helped him to work off the stiffness caused by imprisonment.

He seemed to have forgotten Casmir, who had not been recaptured, and the dog, which was never heard of again; yet, in the great battle that was fought that month near the Oasis of the Three Palms, an old Légionnaire—the same who told me this story—fighting beside Radoub, was amazed, even in the heat of battle, at the fury of the latter.

"He was working off the dog," said the old fellow. "It is always so with the Legion, and that is what makes the Legion so terrible in battle: They are not so much fighting with the enemy, monsieur; *they are bayoneting the past, and what the past has done to them.*"

The second story in this series will appear in the May 7th POPULAR.



IN THE FALL OF THE EVENING

OTTO CARMICHAEL was making a trip through Ireland, when he came upon a sign on a highway, reading as follows:

Until further notice, every vehicle must carry a light when darkness begins. Darkness begins when the lights are lit.

Men Who Serve

By J. Frank Davis

Author of "The Manhandler," Etc.

Of a man who joined the Rangers in the old days when there was little regard for law, and who, because of his insistence upon legality, had a price put on his head all through his life. One of the men who serve their country without regard for their own safety.

CAPTAIN BOB LACEY, since the San Antonio newspapers came in, had been dead to the world in their contents. We sat in a corner of the wide hotel gallery, awaiting the arrival of the westbound train and an addition to Captain Bob's little house party. It was shady and cool on the gallery. The street was hot and dusty. It was that hour in the afternoon when siestas are over but the southeast wind has not begun to blow. Horses hitched along Somersworth's main street stood with drowsy heads. Hound dogs in the dust raised their hind legs tentatively to scratch, decided the effort was hardly worth while, and absent-mindedly gave up the idea. A quiet, ordinary September afternoon in a quiet, leisurely southwest Texas county seat.

A tall, white-haired old man came down the stairs of the three-story brick block opposite and walked slowly across the street toward us. A towering frame of a man, gaunt and wrinkled, with leathery face, and somber, brooding eyes. A man of seventy, seemingly, once very powerful, still erect and dignified, with striking features, set and stern. His mouth, wide and thin, was a straight line above a firm jaw. A

hard man, you would say, a strong man in his prime, perhaps a cruel one.

He crossed to the hotel and walked heavily down the gallery to the opposite end from that where Captain Bob and I sat with yesterday's newspapers. As he lowered himself into a chair, he fumbled awkwardly with the right-hand skirt of his long black frock coat. Although comparatively a tenderfoot, I have seen the gesture often enough to identify it. Under that coat was a belt with a holster and a pistol—undoubtedly a forty-five. One who desires to sit comfortably adjusts such artillery with care.

Quite still he sat, and purposeless. His hands lay loosely upon the arms of his chair. His eyes, dull black beneath bristly white brows, stared before him down the street. One or two passers-by called "Good evenin', judge," respectfully, and he nodded in response. He did not speak.

Captain Bob called me from my furtive study of the gloomy old man by a snort of unrestrained disgust. To my inquiring look, he exclaimed:

"My idea of a perfect vacation would be to go up North and wring the necks of some of these newspaper fellers that write about Texas. Cuss it! They

hand it to us comin' and goin', both ways from the jack! Why don't they come and see for themselves before passin' judgment on us? We go and see *them*!"

Captain Bob is well traveled, and broad in his way. He has been to London and Paris and Denver and San Francisco, knows how to walk down Broadway without getting a crick in his neck, can write a perfectly good check in six figures going on seven, and is as much at home in a San Antonio bank directors' room as on his ranch a few miles northwest of Somersworth. But he is an original charter member of the Alert and Aggrieved Order of Lone Star Defenders, and, like many another man—the trait is not peculiar to the Southwest—he is sometimes intolerant of the other fellow's ignorance regarding the things he himself understands.

"First you see one of these here movies, supposed to represent Texas," he sputtered, "that gives outsiders the general impression it ain't a good idea to come across the State line without takin' on extra life and accident insurance; and then you get a fool piece like this one in the paper that's just as wrong the other way."

"Read it," I suggested.

"It's a piece copied out of a Chicago paper," said Captain Bob, finding the place, "and some feller wrote it that's been once to Texarkana and once to Dallas, both on the same trip, and thinks he's toured the State. Listen!"

He read aloud, registering scorn:

"The days of romance, and excitement are gone in Texas. The capitalist has taken the place of the cowboy. The gunman has made room for the efficiency expert. Civilization has been achieved at the cost of picturesqueness, atmosphere, local color. The old days, with their good and their bad, have completely vanished, and not a trace remains. Adventure is no easier to find to-day in Texas than it is in Illinois."

"Ain't that just nonsense?" he demanded.

"Well," I hedged, "I wouldn't go as far as he does, of course, but things certainly have changed, even in the five years I've been in the State."

"Say, son," said Captain Bob, "listen! Let me tell you this feller that wrote that piece may have meant well, but he's ignorant. He don't know any more about Texas than he does about what T. R.'s goin' to do in 1920, or why a greaser that'll knife a man won't stick a pig. 'Completely vanished!' 'Not a trace!' Huh! Now, I could tell you——" He dropped his voice.

"You see that old feller with the black hat and the string tie?" He twitched his head toward the gaunt old man at the other end of the gallery. "Do you know who he is?"

"Never saw him before," I replied. "You know I never was here until I came down on this visit, and we've been out on the ranch all the time until to-day."

"That's Judge Dan Ebbitts," he said. As this failed to impress me, he exclaimed: "Ain't you ever heard of *him*?"

I lied bromidically: "Why, it seems as though I'd heard the name somewhere. I don't exactly——"

"Now, *don't* tell me," demanded Captain Bob, "that you never heard of Christopher Columbus, or Patrick Henry, or the Alamo! Of course, I forget once in a while that you're only a Yankee. At that, I bet I know more about Roger Williams than you do about Sam Houston. However——"

"Judge Ebbitts is sort of an institution out here. He's been here most as long as I have. There was a time when everybody was talkin' about him from one end of the State to the other. He come to Texas from Tennessee—or maybe it was Kentucky—somewhere up that-a-way—when he was twenty-six, seven years old. That was in the middle eighties. He landed——"

"Do you mean to tell me," I said,

"that that man is not over sixty? Why, he looks——"

"He's fifty-seven, to be exact. Just two years older'n me. There's reasons. Well, as I was sayin', when I was interrupted, he landed in Santone. He was a lawyer, and 'lowed to practice there.

"Santone was gettin' quieter then than it used to be, but it wasn't exactly what you could call a dull town. The palaces of chance were still runnin' wide, and doin' well, and the killin's on Houston Street, where the skyscrapers are now, prob'ly averaged close to one a night, not countin' Mexicans and niggers. At that, it wasn't a specially good town for a young lawyer. There weren't many civil cases—gun play bein' a quicker settlement of disputes that-a-way—and the killin's didn't make as many law jobs as you might think, because they naturally divided themselves into two classes—the kind that didn't need any lawyer to get the killer off, and the kind that there couldn't any lawyer do it. Then there were a lot of older men that had been in the city ever since the war that got most of the practice.

"The Texas Rangers were right busy in those days, and a job in the Ranger service meant excitement, grub, sixty dollars a month, and a moderately constant probability of sudden death to-morrow. They worked singly and in pairs and threes, same as they do now, and in the seventies they'd made the reputation that they have to this day of never startin' anything they weren't ready to finish. Life had been the cheapest thing in Texas for a good many years until they took hold and put the fear of the Lord into desperadoes and outlaws.

"Ebbitts was one of these here young lawyers that thinks so much of the law it's almost a reverence. The way things were goin' on, specially out in this Western country, actually hurt him. Well, he stuck around Santone maybe

a year, and I reckon he had a hard time to make expenses. Anyway, one day he joined out with the Rangers.

"Of course, he could throw a gun, and had plenty of nerve, or he wouldn't have got in. His knowledge of law made him valuable, too. It might have been the combination that made the governor send him to this section. He showed up here in Somersworth alone, along in the summer of eighty-six.

"Back in the seventies, they used to say there wasn't any law a-tall west of the Pecos. At this time, when Ebbitts come out here, it was better than that. There was some law, but lots of folks didn't pay much attention to it.

"You've heard what kind of men had drifted into Texas from all parts of the United States? And they'd been pushed farther and farther, until there were hundreds of them, I don't know but a thousand at the worst, between the Pecos and the Rio Grande. And believe me, son, some of 'em were *bad*!

"King Fisher was gone, and Hardin, and some of the other famous outlaws, but they had plenty of successors. Fisher and Hardin had *some* good points. Most of the men that were tryin' to fill their shoes were just mean, measly desperadoes, thieves, and man-killers.

"The gang that run things in this county and 'most way back to the Guadalupe Mountains, was headed, when Ebbitts come out here, by a great big brute named Dave Hethrick. It was a sort of loose organization, formed and held together by the love of loot, and Hethrick had come to be leader by killin' five men—some said six—that disputed his right to be boss. He was hardly more than a boy, at that—couldn't have been more than twenty-two, three years old. Nobody knew where he come from, or what his real name was, or where he got the bullet scar that puckered up the skin on his right cheek bone, or what he had done

back home that first sent him on the dodge. Nobody asked about such things in those days. What we did know was that he was a sure-nough killer. Every now and then some fool would get it into his head to try to beat him at the draw, and cash in experimentin'.

"And he had a sweet gang behind him—the offscourin's of the rest of Texas, which was goin' some. Mostly, they rustled cattle, payin' special attention to the big cattlemen, who let them get away with a quarter of their herds and thanked the Lord they didn't take half. They stole horses. They were suspected of bein' mixed up in train holdups and more than one bank robbery.

"Of course, we had officials—State officials and county officials, and town marshals in the few towns like here in Somersworth. But they didn't bother Hethrick's gang; they wanted to keep on livin' a while longer. So the gang went on gettin' bolder and bolder, and doin' a little worse and a little worse, until finally some of the big cattlemen dropped up to Austin quietly to see the governor, and the governor he sent Ebbitts.

"A fine mess it was to drop a Ranger into all alone, but not any worse than many another mess the Rangers dropped into at one time and another, here and there. That's what they were for!

"Well, Ebbitts hung around Somersworth, and went back and forth and up and down for three, four months, gettin' the lay of the land and findin' out who was who. Hethrick and his gang, they didn't pay no more attention to him than if he hadn't been here.

"One day, a Dutchman named Kurtz, a small rancher, without sense of humor, or any other sense, rode into town hell-for-leather, and hollerin' for the sheriff. He had a few hundred cows

back here a ways, and the gang had run off about half of 'em.

"This wasn't so unusual as to attract a lot of attention, but he had seen some of the men that did the rustlin', and he didn't hesitate to mention their names, which *was* unusual. He was all for havin' the law on the thieves, and, when the sheriff didn't get enthusiastic about it, Kurtz went before the grand jury—that was in session—and told his story. And the grand jury reported that his cows had been stolen by some person or persons unknown, which was playin' safe, accordin' to custom.

"Of course, everybody in the county knew about this holler, and Kurtz got his in less'n a week. On a dark night, a gang of ten or fifteen men surrounded his house and fired into it again and again. Kurtz and his family they tried to avoid the volleys by layin' on the floor. His wife and the baby in her arms were killed by the same bullet. The oldest girl was shot up so she died two days later. The other one lay behind her father, and the shot that snuffed him out went through and marked her for life. But she was there to tell the story the next day, when some Somersworth men, passin' by, rode up to get a bite and a drink.

"Maybe what Ebbitts did then wasn't exactly the law, in a technical way of speakin', but it was a darn sight better law than we were used to. He went about quietly, and found twenty-four men that he knew could be relied upon and that were sick of it. We'd had enough. Then he impaneled those twenty-four as a grand jury, and indicted twenty-seven men—the whole gang of desperadoes, from Dave Hethrick down.

"With the indictments in his hand, he walked over to the sheriff's office, while we waited outside in a body. Oh, yes, I was young enough and foolish enough to get mixed into it.

"A grand jury of this county,' he

says to the sheriff, 'has just indicted David Hethrick and twenty-six others for various crimes, from cattle stealin' to murder. I call upon you, as sheriff, to serve the warrants; and I want to tell you, if you don't do your duty, you'll settle with me and these other gentlemen.'

"My heavens!" said the sheriff. 'I've got a wife and children, the same as Kurtz had!'

"If you ain't willin' to serve these warrants, there ain't but one other thing for you to do," says Ebbitts; so the sheriff wrote out his resignation then and there, and handed it to him.

"Now, gentlemen," says Ebbitts to us, 'as a member of the Ranger service of the State of Texas, and in the absence of a sheriff of this county, I propose to serve these papers, and I ask you-all to be sworn in as a posse to assist in makin' the arrests.' So twenty-two of us took the oath, the other two bein' willin', but a little too old for that sort of work.

"Of course, all this sort of leaked out while it was goin' on, and the desperadoes took for cover, 'lowin' to lay low a while, kill anybody that came after 'em, and come back and settle with Ebbitts and the rest of us later. But they reasoned wrong. They didn't realize that, after goin' that far, we just naturally *had* to go the distance. The county had, all of a sudden, got too small ever to hold all of us again.

"Some time, maybe, I'll tell you about that hunt. It lasted two months. Twenty-three of us went out, and eighteen of us come back. Seventeen of the desperadoes come back with us. Two hiked for the Big Bend country, and we never did hear anything more of 'em. We buried eight. Of the seventeen, a dozen were more or less wounded. We thought, one time, we'd never get Hethrick back to Somersworth alive. He shot three men before

he was stopped, and there were holes all over him.

"Getting the gang was one thing, convictin' 'em was another. We had all the active members—Ebbitts, in the months he had been ridin' around, had gathered his evidence well enough to show that—but there were plenty of other men in sympathy with 'em—men that had made money off 'em—crooks and sharps and gamblers and tin horns, that naturally sided with bad men against the law. There was a lot of talk that no jury could convict, and that, if it did, the men would be turned loose right in the court, if necessary; and the county judge and the State's attorney, both got cold feet.

"It come down to a sort of test, a whole lot more important than the matter of whether a few men should be hanged or go to the penitentiary. The issue was whether law had really arrived west of the Pecos.

"There was a judge up in Santone that was some man. His name was Tom Freely, and he come from Virginia. Again I don't know as it was exactly the law for a judge from outside the district to come in to hear a case, but he came. When he opened court, he laid a couple of forty-fives on the bench, one at each hand; and everybody noticed that, if his hair was white, his hands didn't shake none; and the governor had appointed Dan Ebbitts to act as special State's attorney.

"The courtroom was full, and, of course, every man was armed, as was ordinary and regular in those times. There were more than a dozen strangers present, who sat all together on one side, with rifles in their laps. They'd come in a body, that mornin', and we all knew what for. On the other side sat the three Rangers that had been sent out in case Ebbitts needed help. They had left their coats outside, and their pistols were in plain sight—two to a man. Alongside the

Rangers were ten or twelve of us that had been in the posse. We had helped start it; we couldn't afford to renig at the finish.

"The desperadoes were handcuffed and chained together in a line, seventeen of 'em, with Hethrick, big and sneerin' and black as hell, about in the middle. They were strung across the room, in front of the judge, and Dan Ebbitts stood at a table between them and the bench. But he didn't face the judge. He faced the prisoners, and on the table before him lay a cocked revolver, pointin' square at Hethrick.

"'I have been told,' says he, lookin' Hethrick in the eyes, 'that some friends of the prisoners may feel disposed to interrupt the business of this court of the sovereign State of Texas. I have also been informed that the signal for such interruption is likely to be given by the prisoner Hethrick. I ask the court's indulgence if I try this case with my back to the court; and I desire to state that if there should be any interruption, this pistol of mine will go off as it lays. My hand will remain on it durin' the proceedin's, and, although it might be possible to shoot me before my associates in the Ranger service could take care of the man that attempted it, the chances that I would not have time to fire at least once, and maybe twice, are very small, indeed.'

"'You have the court's permission to face as you are,' said the judge, and *his* pistols were pointing toward the bad men with rifles. 'We will proceed to hear the evidence.'

"Well, after that, nobody started anything unseemly in the way of interruptions, and, when the evidence had been heard, the jury found every man guilty, and Judge Freely sentenced them. Five, who were proven to have been present when Kurtz and his family were shot up, were sentenced to be hanged. Four, including Hethrick, were sent to the pen for life. The oth-

ers drew from ten to twenty years. The whole trial didn't take all day. There wasn't any pettifoggin' or no technicalities.

"When Judge Freely had finished pronouncin' sentence, and the prisoners were turnin' to march out with their guard, everybody on edge and wonderin' if, maybe, trouble wouldn't begin any minute, Hethrick spoke to Ebbitts.

"They were facing each other, Hethrick with that black sneer on his scarred face, and Ebbitts with his hand on the gun, where it had rested all day, and a little smile in his black eyes, like he always had when he was dangerous, and that mouth of his, that illustrates the geometry thing about a straight line bein' the shortest distance between two points, set hard and steady.

"'Just because you've got us now, Ranger, you don't want to think there ain't no hereafter,' Hethrick says, with all the devil showin' in his face. 'Some of us is goin' to get loose, maybe sooner than you think, and, when we do, we're goin' to *get* you! You can't come out into this country and do what you've done and get away with it. I'm comin' back myself, some day. I ain't goin' to stay in the pen all my life. And when I get out, if nobody's done it before, I'm goin' to kill you as soon as I find you, so help me, whether it's a month from now or fifty years!'

"'I'll try to be here, Dave,' says Ebbitts, icy and hard, without shiftin' his look from Hethrick's eye.

"Then they marched out, and we fellers went as a guard as far as Santone, and Ebbitts and the other Rangers takin' 'em from there to the pen, where the five were hanged quite prompt. And Ebbitts come back to Somersworth and went on about his business, which was makin' men learn that the law had come to stay between the Pecos and the Guadalupe Mountains.

"The conviction of Hethrick and his crowd was the lesson the country

needed. Of course, we didn't get plumb orderly and civilized all in a minute. Things got done out here for a good many years that would have caused quite a lot of excitement if they had happened in Battle's Bridge, Vermont, but it was the beginnin'.

"The honest, law-abiding folks—and it was surprisin' what a big majority they were, once somebody had shown 'em the outlaws could be beat—took a great likin' to Judge Freely for the way he handled the trial, and pretty soon he moved out to Somersworth with his daughter and set up to practice law. It was natural, respectin' each other's nerve like they must, that he and Ebbitts should become great friends. Nobody was any surprised, the next fall, when Ebbitts married Margaret Freely, resigned his job as a Ranger, and settled down here to practice with the old man.

"Then Flip Blynn, one of Hethrick's gang, escaped from the pen, and stopped off on his way to the Rio Grande to try to settle the old score. They met down there by the corner to the railroad station, where the Elks' Hall is now, and Ebbitts beat him to the draw and killed him.

"Three or four years went by, and the ten-year men got out—three of 'em in a bunch. They'd had some time off for good behavior, and nobody was lookin' for 'em to get turned loose for a year or more yet; in fact, the town had sort of forgotten about 'em. One of 'em went north toward the Territory, and we never heard anything more of him. The other two, Pete Harriman and a man called Big Bend Regan, dropped in here after dark. They met Ebbitts and his father-in-law, who was gettin' along in years, and not as quick as he used to be, comin' out of the post office. When the shootin' was over, Harriman and Big Bend were both dead, but so was Judge Freely, and

Ebbitts had a couple of holes in him that like to killed him.

"From that day, Judge Ebbitts—we started callin' him judge as soon as the old man was gone—knew that unless he left Texas and hid out somewhere, only his own gun throwin' was goin' to stand between him and the revenge of that gang, and he wasn't the kind that hides out. He thought a heap of the old judge, and they say used to reproach himself to Margaret for not workin' quicker and savin' the old man. That was nonsense, because, from all accounts, he went into action as quick as any man could have expected.

"He begun to get quieter those days—not that he ever was exactly noisy—and they said he used to practice the draw a whole lot. There was a little Margaret up to his house now, a black-haired kid, with eyes like her mother's.

"Bein' a lawyer sort of goes with gettin' into politics, and Judge Ebbitts went into that game. We sent him to the legislature a couple of terms, and he made the usual run of friends and enemies. He had a bad fallin' out up there at Austin with old Phil Jamewell, and, when Jamewell run for governor, Ebbitts stumped south Texas against him. You've heard, prob'ly, what a bitter fight that was to lick Jamewell. Ebbitts was in the thick of it; said the same nasty things about the old man that the rest did, but maybe he got under Jamewell's skin worse than the others. We-all sort of looked for Jamewell to come down here some day, totin' a gun and lookin' for a settlement; but he knew a skunk trick worth two of that. One of the first things he did, after he had been elected and taken his seat, was to pardon every remainin' son of a gun of that old gang of desperadoes, except Hethrick himself; and as the old man kept it out of the newspapers for a day or two, five of the seven landed into this town one night without a livin' soul expectin' 'em!

"The judge lived out this east road a ways—same house he lives in now, for that matter—and he and the family had gone to bed, along 'bout ten o'clock, when somebody knocks on the door and sings out that Bill Kingman, who owns a ranch about ten miles out, and is a considerable friend of the judge, has been gored by a bull, and wants the judge to come out and draw his will. Miz Ebbitts comes out of the bedroom with the judge as he fixes to light a lamp, and runs forward just as the gang begins shootin' through the window. Perhaps they don't aim to get her, and then, again, perhaps they do. You can't never tell what a rattlesnake means. Anyway, when the neighbors come over, hearin' the shootin', the judge is laid out unconscious, shot up pretty bad, and the little girl is screamin' over the dead body of her mother. And there's two more corpses outside the house. The judge must have got 'em after he'd been hit at least once, because Margaret said he staggered at the first volley, when Miz Ebbitts was killed.

"He didn't talk much to anybody durin' the three or four months he was gettin' well; just laid and thought, and looked way off, like he's doin' now. He's been that-a-way more or less ever since. When he was strong enough—*before* he was strong enough, Doc Sawyer said—he set out to trail the three murderers that had got away. He come back after a while, and said two of 'em were dead. We didn't get the details.

"More'n a year later, he heard, somehow, that Red Ike Snyder, the last of the five, was over the Mexican border, down in Chihuahua. Leavin' the little girl with my wife, to take care of, he started for Jimenez, found Red Ike, taunted him to draw, and killed him. He was gone seven weeks. A few days after he left, Margaret taken a fever.

The grass was beginnin' to grow on her grave when he got back.

"Well, that's about all the story. A regular 'Hamlet' plot for dead folks. It sort of explains why he looks like he looks. Some story, ain't it?"

"Tragic," I replied, eying the silent, immobile, saturnine old man. He sat still and purposeless, as he had sat for an hour. His hands lay loosely upon the arms of his chair. His dull black eyes stared, under his bristly white brows, down the street.

"Tragic enough," I repeated, as my memory harked back to the beginning of the conversation. "But still I don't see what it's got to do with the point you made—about the days of excitement and romance in Texas not being gone. Even the last of these things happened a dozen or fifteen years ago. What's that got to do with *now*?"

"That's so," replied Captain Bob. "Why, I was thinkin' of another piece I read in this same paper. It says the governor's pardoned Dave Hethrick, and that they turned him loose day before yesterday. He's comin' home, the paper says, and due to get here on the No. 8 to-day. And listen, son! Either somebody's telegraphed the old judge, or he seen it in the paper himself. He's sittin' here waitin'—just like he promised Hethrick he would."

The street began to acquire much movement long before the whistle of the train. Men gathered in the store doorways and aimlessly conversed in shaded spots on the sidewalks. The trend of the population was toward the vicinity of the hotel; others, it seemed, had read the paper, and remembered. Women and children were conspicuously absent.

Beyond seemingly careless nods, the men paid no heed to Judge Ebbitts. He remained alone at his end of the gallery, although the chairs at our end had filled. He sat as still, as gloomy

as ever, until we could hear No. 8 pulling out westward from the station, and incoming passengers began to appear around the corner. Then slowly he rose, and removed his long black coat. He laid it carefully on the railing of the gallery. I thought he sighed.

Slowly, firmly, and with shoulders thrown back, he tramped to the steps and down them to the sidewalk. He stood there, alone, facing the train's arrivals. His holster was hitched well forward. The grip of his pistol was within easy reach of a quick-clutching hand. He and the spectators waited. Leisurely enough, but methodically, the townsfolk sought places outside a probable line of fire. The city marshal, coatless, with his badge shining and his pistol also well to the front, stood passively in an opposite doorway, evidently interpreting his duty in this particular case to be a guarantee of fair play, with such measures to come afterward as circumstances should require.

Some distance behind all the other arrivals, a man turned the corner, looking up and down the street uncertainly. He had been, in youth, a giant. To-day he was bowed and old and terribly emaciated.

He came slowly up the street, with a queer, halting step. The skin that was drawn tightly over his cheek and jaw bones was the pasty color of a corpse, except for two bright spots high up on the cheeks. One of these spots touched a puckered, disfiguring scar that gave a sinister cast to the right side of his face. His eye sockets were shadowed caverns. He wore an ill-fitting, unseasonably heavy dark suit, and a cap beneath which straggled a few thin wisps of gray hair. He was panting, with lower jaw slacked, and he stopped and leaned against a hitching rail, coughing. When he looked up he saw the judge, standing alone, and the crowd parted.

He slipped his hideous new coat from his shoulders and let it drop un-

heeded to the ground. He raised his hands, turning slowly around. It was plain to be seen of all that he had no weapon. Still with his long, thin arms stretched out from his body, he came on toward Ebbitts. His eyes, fascinated, shifted from the judge's stern face to his pistol and back again. He stopped when he was ten paces from Ebbitts and called to him. His voice was cracked and uncertain, as though he had not raised it for years.

"Dan Ebbitts!" he called. "*I want to be let alone!*"

A statue would have given as much sign of hearing as the old judge.

"I want to let bygones be bygones," the quavering voice went on. He spoke oddly, without moving his lips overmuch, and his drawn face was as devoid of human expression as the face of a mummy, except for the eyes, which were strained and frightened. "I just want to stay here—and look at the sky—and breathe the free air—and be let alone!" He coughed, and waited to get his breath.

"Listen, Dan Ebbitts!" he went on. "I been up there a long time—twenty-eight years, eight months, and sixteen days. I'm fifty-one years old. An old man. I don't want no trouble with nobody, never any more. . . . Fifteen years ago, it would have been different. When all the rest of the boys got out, and I knew most of 'em would try to get you, I used to lay awake nights and hope they wouldn't, so I could do it myself. Fifteen years ago! Then, after I got old and sick, it didn't seem . . . Sometimes, the last few years, I've thought I'd write you a letter or get a message out to you, but it didn't seem worth while, because I had T. B., and I s'posed I'd die right there. That's how come they turned me loose—the T. B. I ain't goin' to be around to bother you so *damn* long. I—I'm sorry—for what the boys did. I heard about it. We hear things—up there.

Listen, Mister Ebbitts," he whined. "I want to live a while right here, where it's sunny—and free. Mister Ebbitts, *please* let me alone!"

The brooding, somber eyes never left the blinking, flinching ones. There was a pause. Then:

"All right, Hethrick. I won't kill you to-day—nor any other day, if you behave yourself. You're safe in this town for all me. But—try to keep out of my sight."

Stumbling, as though unaccustomed exercise and speech had exhausted him to the point of collapse, Hethrick turned and recovered his coat. He tried twice to pick it up, and staggered, and a silent citizen finally stooped for it and helped him to get it on. He went on down the street with his queer, hitching step, looking at the ground a few paces before him, not noticing the faces on either side.

Judge Ebbitts stepped back and reached for his coat lying across the gallery rail. He caught Captain Bob's eye.

"Bob," he said, and there was the slightest twitching at the corners of his long, set mouth. "It looks to me at last, God willin', like I hadn't ever got to kill another man."

With his coat on his arm, he tramped across the street through respectful, quiet groups. He looked less erect, somehow, and very, very weary. We saw his feet slowly set out to mount the stairs.

Captain Bob spoke, after a minute:

"They both look pretty tired and shrunk, don't they? Pretty old for their age. And they both got that-a-way, when you come to think of it, by servin' the State—one after one fashion, the other after another. Is there a moral in that, son—or isn't there?"



GETTING THE YEAR STRAIGHT

WHEN the year 1916 came in, Charles Edward Stewart, chief clerk of the Department of Justice in Washington, sat at his desk for two or three days and tore his hair because most of the documents that came up to him from his subordinates for approval were dated 1915.

Finally he rushed into the office of John T. Suter, secretary to the attorney general, and burst forth:

"I can't stand these boneheaded government clerks any longer! I'm going to have posted in every office in this department to-day this notice. Read it."

Suter read:

Judging from the letters which are submitted through this office for signature, there appears to be a most decided difference of opinion as to whether the current year is 1915 or 1916. Many of the employees of the department believe in sticking to an old friend, and while this is a commendable sentiment, perhaps, the fact remains that a considerable sum has been expended for 1916 calendars, and there seems to be a slight majority who favor that year. For the sake of uniformity, therefore, it is suggested that the advocates of 1915 try the new year and see if it will not measure up to their expectations.

"I guess that'll fix 'em," observed Stewart, with great satisfaction.

"There's only one trouble about it," observed Suter mildly.

"What's that?" asked the proud author.

"Only," Suter informed him, "that you dated it nineteen hundred and fifteen."

Suppressed Evidence

By Howard Fielding

Author of "Who Killed Jack Robinson?" "Bill Harris—His Line," Etc.

In this novel a playwright becomes part of a drama in real life—a murder mystery that involves a girl who is to give the playwright a bigger surprise than any he had planned for the stage. The story of a dead man, a rifled pocketbook, and a missing Something for which thirty thousand dollars was offered but which was worth millions.

(In Two Parts—Part One)

CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERY OF THE GENTLEMAN ADVENTURER.

SUCH a sound would have been startling a dozen years ago. It was like a pistol shot. Coming to Stanley Abbott's ears in his room at the St. Mark, on Forty-ninth Street, it barely got through the barrier of indifference to noise which is now as necessary to a New Yorker as a shell is to a clam. There was made in Abbott's mind the impression of a sound a little different from the back fire of an automobile. A thousand back-fire explosions a day were about the average on that block.

Abbott was sitting in a morris chair, with the bottom of an old trunk tray across the arms for a writing board; and he was tinkering a play which he had written in the past six months, neglecting everything else, even his own living, for the sake of it. He had sold a few short stories during this period, and the proceeds might have sufficed for a close-fisted, self-denying young man, but Abbott was not that sort. For

four or five years after leaving college he had been a reporter in New York, climbing quickly to be a "star"; always writing for the magazines, on the side, and always spending his money as fast as he got it. Two years ago he had quit journalism, and had devoted himself to fiction, boiling the pot with little yarns while turning out a novel which was threatening to be a best seller when the great war killed it.

He believed that he had a fortune in his play, but no optimism could disguise the fact that he was now in debt on all sides. He couldn't keep his hotel bill below two hundred dollars, and this fact was causing unpleasantness. Mr. Rand, the manager, had reminded him on the morning of this very day that he was living at the Hotel *Saint Mark*, not the Hotel *Easy Mark*, after which unkindly jest Mr. Rand was lucky to be living anywhere, for Abbott was a large, athletic person with warm reddish hair and a cold gray eye. It stuck in his mind, as he sat tinkering his drama, that he had shown weakness in accepting Rand's apology. Debt had taken the spirit out of him; he was

sick with disgust and worry over his pecuniary situation, and mentally exhausted with work which, for many weeks, had been unrelieved by any recreation or suitable companionship.

He had made no attempt to market his play. He was determined to have it properly put on, under an arrangement which would give him a decent share of the profits. What he hoped for was an interest in the production, and this would require capital. There was an uncle of his who might lend him the money, but the uncle had gone to England on business, and his return had been postponed again and again as a result of difficulties incident to the war. The loan was not a subject which Abbott cared to introduce in correspondence across the ocean.

On this particular afternoon there was too much on Abbott's mind, and the play lacked its usual grip. It must, or he would not have noticed a sound so ordinary as the one that has been mentioned. Vaguely disturbed, he sat for a few moments listening, as if for something which would tell him why the back fire of an automobile had seemed to be inside the house and oddly muffled; but his thoughts drifted away to his own troubles and hopes. After a while he laid the writing board down on the bed, and began to wander around the room; and thus he came to hear faint noises from the hall, as if some one were groping about on the floor.

He opened the door and saw a man stooping beside a rather large satchel into which he was putting something. Abbott did not see what it was, but he had a quick glimpse of the bag's contents, which seemed to be black fur, a pillow muff, or a broad neckpiece folded. It was a sticky day in July, and the sight of the fur gave Abbott a shrinking sensation, as if it had been put around his neck.

The man closed the bag quickly, and remained crouching low, looking along

the floor. He wore a panama hat tilted forward, the brim turned up behind and down in front, so that Abbott saw only the back of his head, a corner of his chin, and an end of a stiff black mustache.

"Lost something?" said Abbott. "I'll get some matches."

The man neither replied nor looked up, but an instant later he said, "Ah!" and rose, with the bag in his hand. He took two quick paces down the hall and picked up some small object. Abbott did not see the thing which had been lost and found, but he got a partial view of the man's face as he turned into the transverse corridor toward the elevators.

He looked like an Italian; was of medium height, with slim legs, and disproportionately thick chest and shoulders; perhaps about thirty-five years old. Certainly he was not the tenant of the opposite room, though he seemed to have come from there. Abbott's neighbor, unless a change had taken place that afternoon, was a large and somewhat formidable person of some northern race, not at all the sort of man who would hide his countenance or hesitate to use his voice when he was addressed, courteously or otherwise, by a stranger. But all this was none of Abbott's business, and he dismissed it from his mind.

A few minutes later, the maid who took care of his room came bringing towels, and she lingered for conversation, as she always did on the least encouragement, and sometimes with none at all, as in the present instance. She had come to New York from the Maine coast about six months ago, and had not yet recovered from her astonishment. "I didn't know there was such a foreign place on the face of the earth," is the way she had expressed herself to Abbott on the occasion of her first outburst of confidence after a day or two of extreme shyness. "If it wasn't for you and the housekeeper,

I'd think I was in Guinea. Certainly on this floor I've got Spaniards of all nations and Frenchmen of every tongue, as father used to say. I'd be homesick, if I had any home; but I haven't, except the graveyard. You ought to see it," she added, brightening. "It's a lovely place;" and she had proceeded to describe, with singular vividness, the burial ground where all her family reposed.

It was that description so quaint and clear which had ensnared Abbott's interest, not the girl's appearance, though that was sufficiently notable. Laura was young, slim, and very pretty, with silken, wavy hair, red and brown like a horse-chestnut, and big gray eyes with a touch of violet. She seemed to have a sort of education; often quoted good poetry, and spoke of characters in Shakespeare, Scott, and especially Dickens, as if they had lived in the town where she had passed her girlhood. She complained that the men in that hotel—a bachelor establishment—never had any books in their rooms; and she would usually have one of her own, and sit in a window of the air shaft to read while waiting for the next guest to get up and go out.

Yet she impressed Abbott as silly and scatterbrained, with a sentimental streak that boded ill for her. In the course of months the girl had got on his sympathies, despite the plenitude of his own troubles. Her innocence was obvious, but it seemed to be supported by no solid qualities of mind or character. Merely to think of her as unprotected was to make a jest of her position. A girl of that sort, friendless in a big city and exposed by her occupation to contacts with all sorts of men, is a lamb tied in a runaway where the striped tigers and the yellow lions come down to drink.

On the July day in question she paused at Abbott's door after putting the towels in the bathroom.

"I guess the gentleman adventurer didn't go out," she said. "I left his towels outside the door. I'm afraid of him. He roars at me."

"You mean the man across the hall?" said Abbott.

She nodded.

"Then spake the souls of the gentleman adventurers." She pronounced Kipling's line remarkably well. "I thought of that the first time I heard Captain Gordon roar. I'll bet his great-grandfather was one of them."

"Is he a captain?" Abbott asked.

"I don't know anything about him," said Laura. "Of course he isn't a seafaring man; anybody could see that. But the blood's in him all the same. I've got a right to know, because my mother's grandfather was one of the pirates of Penzance. Honest; when they had real pirates there."

"I've forgotten what the pirates of Penzance did," said Abbott.

"I never knew, and didn't want to. I was afraid it wouldn't be good enough; I'd rather imagine it. But I suppose they robbed ships. That's the way I used to play it, when I was little."

Abbott couldn't afford the time for this chatter, and he carefully preserved silence, though he had learned that this usually stimulated Laura to find some topic which would compel his attention and interest.

"Captain Gordon had a caller this afternoon," she said. "He's been here before. I think he's an inventor."

"An inventor?" Abbott tried to recall the man's appearance. "What are the symptoms?"

"Oh, nothing, except that they're always doing it. You can see them inventing, in their minds. I had an uncle—my Aunt Laura's second husband—who was like that, and a little crazy besides. The things he invented never worked."

But seeing that the uncle failed to

make a hit with Abbott, she reverted to Gordon's caller.

"I saw him waiting for an elevator," she said. "He'd put his bag on the floor, and was fussing with some little thing that he held in his hand—white like celluloid, and about as big as my thumb." She exhibited a thumb, and incidentally a hand and wrist very prettily modeled. "He seemed to be unscrewing one end of it, but he hid it in his pocket when he saw me watching him, so I didn't see what was inside."

Abbott would have asked a few questions on this point, except that he felt that he was detaining Laura too long. He began to sort out the pages of his play that were scattered over the writing board; but Laura declined to be dismissed. She made a pretense of dusting his typewriter, which was uncovered.

"I wish I knew typewriting," she said, making graceful little motions over the keys. "Then I could copy your play for you. But you're so careful to lock it up, always; maybe you wouldn't trust me to see it."

"The play's a secret between myself and Melpomene," he replied. "Know the lady?"

"Why, of course," said Laura. "She's the muse of tragedy."

"Well," said he, "my play's only a melodrama, but it'll be a tragedy if anybody gets a chance to steal it before it's copyrighted. There'll be risk enough, even then." He laid his hand on the manuscript. "This is either a hundred thousand dollars or it's nothing; and you can bet that no human being but myself has read it, up to date."

"So you told me, once before," said Laura rather stiffly.

"I'd trust you," he hastened to assure her. "The only objection to your typewriting my play is pecuniary; I couldn't pay the bill. I don't keep

square with you, as it is, for the care you take of me. Will you accept this on account?" And he tendered her a quarter.

Laura put her hands behind her back.

"You give me too much," she said. "Most of the others don't give me anything." Her mood changed instantly, and she laughed. "You ought to have seen Mr. Latour giving me a dime this morning. He's the pompous little Frenchman in No. 715, with a round stomach and a beak like a bird's. This is how he gave me the dime."

She felt in an imaginary vest pocket; pulled out too large a coin by mistake, and thrust it hastily back; then chased a dime from end to end of the pocket till she had cornered it; and presented it to Abbott with elaborate and self-satisfied benevolence.

This was remarkably clever pantomime, and it was Latour to the life; but, of course, it wasn't quite the thing to do. Why bother about that? His impulse always was to let the girl do as she pleased. He had a notion that these talks with him, and the playfulness with which she brightened them, were all the fun she had. She worked all day, and so far as he could discover, she never did anything for amusement except go to the theater once a week, and sit in the top balcony with Mrs. Ayre, the housekeeper. On the other six evenings she sewed, or read aloud to Mrs. Ayre, who had told him that Laura read "bee-utifully." Most of her outdoor exercise seemed to be taken on the roof.

He felt toward the girl a helpless pity, an aching kindness which had no possible expression. He wished she could go away to some place where she would be safe, if any such place existed, in a world like this, now thoroughly shown up, convicted, bought, and paid for; the property of Commercialism, whose eldest son is War, and favorite

daughter Shame, and whose father is the Devil.

If Abbott had felt sure that he was not encouraging Laura toward familiarity with the other guests, he would have put no damper on her fooling; but he meant to move away as soon as he could pay his bill, and when he was gone the girl would hardly be content to spend her days in silence. He did not care to smooth the path of any successor. It is an old, old saying that a man will protect a woman from everybody but himself.

Abbott laid the quarter down on the typewriter table.

"That's yours, Laura," he said; but she made no move to take it.

"I know you can't afford tips," she said. "You need money as badly as I do." She suddenly dropped her voice almost to a whisper. "If you had what Mr. Gordon's got! Oh, such a lot! I saw him counting it this afternoon, just after he came home. He thought he'd shut his door, I suppose, but it blew open, and I was in the hall. He was sitting at his desk, with a big pocket-book open in front of him. The money was in it, under a kind of strap, and he was lifting up the ends of bills one by one, like this." She counted out a fortune in the air. "I wish you had half of that, and I the other half."

It struck Abbott that she was too serious about this. Her desire for money seemed to have something uncommonly strong at the root of it, inconsistent with his idea of her general instability. He felt as if he were being invited to a partnership in envy of his neighbor's affluence.

"Forget other people's money, Laura, and remember your own," said he. "There it is, right on that table. I'd meant to give it to you."

He sat down in the morris chair, put the writing board across the arms, and pretended to begin work. After brief

hesitation, Laura took the quarter and walked toward the door. A coat of Abbott's lay across the back of a chair, and the girl deftly slipped the money into the little change pocket as she passed. With a corner of an eye, he saw her do it; saw also imperfectly the expression of her face as she looked at him for a moment before leaving the room.

The young man arose and paced the floor, feeling guilty and foolish. He had tried to behave rightly toward this girl, and he hadn't done it. He had talked with her too much, selfishly at times, for the sake of her clever tricks, her power of observing and portraying personal peculiarities—right in his line, of course, and like a model to draw from. The fact that he was nearly always in his room at work, making it virtually unavoidable that she should come in while he was there, had been a partial cause of the trouble, but he was greatly to blame, nevertheless, if she had really come to feel toward him as he now suspected.

Discouraged and brain weary, he was incapable of thinking clearly about anything; and he couldn't afford the mental energy which this new worry demanded. He must finish his potboiler that night, and must get into condition for the work, pump up a little interest, if possible, in the uninviting task. The story was without substantial merit, but the main situation was not so bad, and some of the characters ought to be amusing, if he could give them life. And he was stricken with humiliation that the rattlepated girl whom he had just driven away possessed a better gift than his own for seeing human beings. Doubtless she saw them only skin-deep; and yet her characterization of the man in the opposite room as a "gentleman adventurer" seemed more than superficial—though Abbott knew absolutely nothing about him except his looks. How had Laura come to read Kipling's

"Last Chanty" and remember it? The girl was a queer freak.

"Poor child!" he said to himself. "Have I done anything to make her life more miserable than it had to be?"

He looked around the room, and hated it. A little fresh air was what he wanted, and he strode toward his coat on the chair.

There was a stumbling, fumbling sound in the hall, and some one knocked on the door as if with two open hands, beating like a frightened woman. Abbott thought of Laura as he flung the door open, but it was the hotel's valet who fell in, dropping somebody's coat from his arm as he did so. The trousers appertaining to the suit were on the hall floor already.

Over the man's head, Abbott saw the door of the opposite room open, but a strong draft of air immediately closed it, with a bang. The fat, little Polish tailor jumped and squealed at this loud sound, and let fall a bunch of pass-keys fastened to a big billet of wood.

"What's wrong?" said Abbott.

The incoherent reply seemed to convey the information that somebody was dead. Abbott picked up the pass-keys, found the right one by inspiration, and let himself into his neighbor's room.

At first he saw no one, dead or alive. In front of him a closet door, wide open, reached almost to the bed, and cut off the view. Stepping aside, Abbott saw the door of the bathroom, in the same wall, a few inches ajar; and the wind could not close it because a man's head lay on the threshold.

Instantly there flashed through Abbott's mind the memory of the sound which he had heard; but when he looked into the bathroom there was no blood. The man lay on his face, with one arm under his body. Rigor had begun, and the hands were cold. The gentleman adventurer had sailed out upon the deepest sea there is, and upon the most adventurous of quests.

CHAPTER II.

A BLESSED LITTLE LIAR.

While assuring himself that life was extinct, Abbott had turned the body on its back. The face was contorted, but its expression was the extreme opposite of deathlike; it was eloquent of a flaming energy, as if Gordon had died in the first instant of sudden and furious contention. This look stamped the idea of murder on Abbott's mind, though it might be only an indication of the way that Gordon had confronted death. There was no visible sign that he had been attacked by any human adversary. Whatever the fight had been, he had certainly gone into it with that unterrified and virile recklessness which had won Abbott's appreciative attention when he had seemed to see it written on the Englishman's countenance at their first meeting in the corridor a fortnight ago.

Abbott called to the tailor, who had remained in the hall, and compelled the man to come into the room, much against his will, and to sit down. Valuables are often missing in such cases, as every reporter knows, and for the valet's own safety it was better to detain him on the scene. Having attended to this detail, Abbott telephoned to the office and communicated the news to Mr. Rand. Then, impelled by natural curiosity and the instinct of his former profession, he looked about for something which might indicate what form of death it was that had cut off so strong a man without permitting a struggle or a cry.

Gordon's right hand was tightly clenched, as if holding something. Abbott opened it, and found a piece of metal, seemingly steel, shaped like a shallow saucer, and perhaps a trifle larger than a dime. It was blackened on the convex side, and looked as if it might have been part of a little lamp, so far as its appearance gave any hint

of a possible use to which the thing might have been put.

The reporter's impulse, which does not act precisely as the police would wish in such affairs, urged the young man to keep what he had found. Possibly there would be a sensational, exclusive story in the case, through the sale of which he could relieve his present necessities, but he bade Satan get behind him, and restored the piece of metal to the dead man's hand. As to its evidential value, Abbott had no conjecture, but it properly belonged to the constituted authorities. It might be a clew, and if there was any other on the scene Abbott failed to find it.

His investigation was interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Rand and the resident physician of the house; and while the latter was making a superficial examination of the body, two detectives and a policeman in uniform came from the West Forty-seventh Street station.

Mr. Rand told them that the guest was registered as David A. Gordon, of London, and that virtually nothing was known of him. He had never stayed at the St. Mark before. His baggage consisted of a steamer trunk and a satchel. He had received only one caller, so far as the manager was aware; and he furnished a description of the man whom Abbott had seen in the hall.

"He was here once or twice last week," said Mr. Rand. "Jones is the name he gives—and he might be a Welshman, at that, though he looks like an Italian. He came about half past two this afternoon, and stayed till almost four. I saw him coming and going."

The doctor said that Gordon's death seemed to have been instantaneous. It might have been due to poison, but he declined to express any opinion as to the cause. There was no wound that he could discover. An autopsy would be necessary. He doubted that the man

had been dead more than an hour; he would place four o'clock as the earliest possible time of death. It was now half past five.

As this point seemed likely to be extremely important, Abbott suggested a consultation of doctors, but this advice was postponed for the inspector's consideration, and eventually forgotten.

Meanwhile, Abbott told his story, by request, omitting nothing except the sound he had heard. This seemed irrelevant, as there was no reason to suppose that a shot had been fired. He described the behavior of "Jones" in the hall, but gave the man the benefit of the full truth, which was that he had not shown nervousness or alarm.

"You didn't hear this party, Gordon, moving around afterward, did you?" one of the detectives asked.

"No," Abbott responded, "nor before."

"Why wouldn't he come to the door, if his friend was hunting for something in the hall?"

"I don't know," said Abbott. "The man made very little noise about it. Gordon might not have heard him."

"And you didn't see what Jones picked up?"

"No."

"He had furs in his hand bag, you say? Ain't it rather hot for furs, in the middle of July?"

"Yes," said Abbott.

The other detective, anxiously watched by Mr. Rand, and stolidly by the uniformed policeman, had been searching Gordon's pockets.

"There's nothing on him but thirty-eight cents in change," he said. "No bills, no pocketbook. Did he carry one?"

"I don't know," said Rand. "I never saw it."

Abbott thought of what Laura had told him. She would be questioned presently, and would doubtless favor the police with one of her inimitable

pantomimes showing just how Captain Gordon had counted all that money. This exhibition would not be taken as a proof of innocence, but of foolishness, with which the police are much more familiar. Motive, opportunity, and folly are the three aces of police detection. Abbott had seen too much of this sort of thing to have any faith in garrulous candor as a protection against trouble.

Laura's work, of course, gave her access to all the rooms on this side of the seventh floor, and it would readily be discovered that she had visited most of them in the hour following Gordon's death. If she should make herself conspicuous as the only person having knowledge of his wallet and its contents, the police would be likely to hold her as a material witness, if nothing worse; and if the affair should assume importance, and drag on in the usual manner, the girl's position would be deplorable.

It would not be necessary to suppose that she had taken anything directly from the body, or even that she had known that Gordon was dead. The pocketbook might have been lying on a desk which was so situated that the open closet door would have been a perfect screen, and a thief might not have suspected what lay beyond.

These arguments had no convincing force for Abbott himself; he took the girl's innocence for granted, and was wholly concerned with her peril. He felt an impulse to protect her, and the first step in that direction would be to warn her against talking too much. With this benevolent purpose in mind, he moved quietly to the door, and opened it just in time to save Inspector John Conniston the trouble of knocking.

"Hello, young man!" said Conniston. "I thought you were out of the newspaper business. What are you doing here?"

"I live here," Abbott replied, gently

trying to get by. "I'm going to my room. Your men have got my story. It doesn't amount to anything."

"I'll hear it, though," said Conniston, coming in and closing the door behind him. And he did hear it; but even then Abbott couldn't get away, because the inspector wanted him to be on hand to corroborate or contradict the testimony of Rogowsky, the valet, which Conniston proceeded to take.

Rogowsky said that he had pressed a suit of clothes for the gentleman—and he waved a hand toward Gordon's corpse and bowed politely. They were to have been ready at five, but he was a few minutes late. He had knocked at the door, and then had got the passkeys from the elevator boy. He had meant to lay the suit on the foot of the bed, but when he looked beyond the closet door, he saw the gentleman lying there, with the bathroom door against his head. Then he had run to Mr. Abbott's room.

Rogowsky enlarged upon the subject of his terrors unnecessarily, for they were still visibly present. After every reply to a question he started for the door in the hope that the examination might be over. He denied having seen any money or valuables, and he submitted eagerly to a search which left his reputation unblemished. In addition, Abbott helped the little man by telling how he had detained him in the room.

As for Abbott himself, the fact that he was dressed in tennis trousers and shirt averted any unpleasantness. So long as no one ventured to lay a hand on him, he thought it not worth while to make trouble, though he knew that one of the detectives searched his room while Conniston held him in conversation.

Meanwhile, the inspector had asked for the maid, and Rand had telephoned a summons, but there seemed to be some delay in finding Laura. The girl's danger was giving Abbott more and

more uneasiness. By what she had told him, the robbery in the case was large enough to raise a rumpus on its own account; and the death of Gordon loomed behind it as a very dark mystery. It looked like murder. The doctor had not believed it to have been due to natural causes, as Abbott had readily perceived. As for suicide, it was improbable that Gordon had ordered a suit of clothes to be pressed for his premeditated burial.

Accident seemed out of the question. There was no vial or paper that could have held anything which Gordon might have taken for medicinal purposes. Of course, he might have carried a single capsule in his pocket, but the chances would still be heavy that he had not meant to kill himself with it, and that its fatal effect was due to some one's murderous design rather than to a druggist's error.

The detectives had found the piece of metal in the dead man's hand, and conceivably he might have taken poison out of that, but it was an odd thing for such a purpose. Moreover, it seemed strange that a poison instantly mortal had not left a mark which a physician could discover; strange, too, that the fall of so heavy a man had not been heard, and that he had escaped a scar, falling in so small a space, all tiles and hard, projecting objects.

The more mystery the worse for any person implicated. The murder and the robbery might be parts of a single crime, or they might be separate, but the police would make no fine distinctions at the outset of the case. They would arrest anybody who might be involved by apparent circumstantial evidence, and the unfortunate individual would be virtually under suspicion of murder.

Abbott was uncomfortably near the center of the whirlpool, but he believed that he knew how to take care of himself, with something to spare for other

innocent persons. He had already saved the valet from the indiscretion of running away, and he still hoped to assist Laura in the impending ordeal. Her unguided loquacity might easily get her into trouble. The least interference on his part would be instantly and strenuously resented by the inspector, but Abbott's experience in criminal cases had not been devoid of clashes with the police, and though he had sometimes been in the wrong, he had never got worse than a draw. He would take a chance for the sake of this poor girl who would otherwise be utterly defenseless.

And with that he heard Laura speak, far off in the hall, and he listened, with uneasiness, for the girl's voice, though of a contralto quality, and never loud, possessed a singular penetration. Every word of hers came all that distance, soft and clear, but fortunately what she said was of no importance. She was addressing the housekeeper, whose nasal, melancholy speech did not resolve itself into intelligible words till the two women stood outside the door.

The inspector let them in; that is, he let Laura in, and Mrs. Ayre put one foot over the threshold, but she had a fear of her fellow creatures when the breath was out of them, and she declined to come farther.

"I don't know anything," she protested. "I was in the linen room all the afternoon."

"Well," said the inspector, "that's an alibi. You can wait outside." And he shut the door on her.

Abbott had expected that Laura would run to him for protection, but she didn't even give him a glance. On his part, he was surprised at her composure; probably she had seen so much of death in her own family that its presence had ceased to alarm her. Certainly she showed no timidity, but only a quaint, old-fashioned reverence. She walked to the center of the room, near

the foot of the bed, and from this point she could see Gordon's head and shoulders. No one had covered him; he stared a little outward into the room with that lifelike expression of suddenly aroused and furious resistance, as if he might get up and go on fighting.

Apparently concerned for the dead man alone and oblivious of the others, Laura turned aside and opened a drawer in the bureau, from which she took a handkerchief. With this, she crossed to the open door of the bathroom, knelt for a moment, looking down at Gordon's face, then gently laid the handkerchief over it.

The six living men had been as quiet as the seventh who was mere clay. Every eye had followed the girl; but, except for such small movements as this necessitated, no one had stirred. Abbott had been the stillest of them all, because he was the only one who comprehended and appreciated the peculiar power by virtue of which this silence had been created. Nobody's attention wavered for an instant till Laura had returned to her former place. Then, by some exercise of natural art too subtle for Abbott's observation, she released them all, and every man's breath came out of his lungs audibly.

There was a shuffling of feet. Conniston cleared his throat and said: "You're the maid, I believe," a little as if he expected some one to contradict him. "What's your name?"

"Laura Caverly."

"You took care of this man's room. When were you in here last?"

"This forenoon, about eleven."

"Was he here?"

"No, sir."

"When and where did you last see him alive?"

Abbott tried to catch the girl's eye before she could answer, but he failed.

"A little before two. He was in his

room, with the door open. I saw him from the hall."

"What was he doing?" the inspector asked; and Abbott helplessly prepared for the worst.

"Nothing," said Laura, with a gentle, negative movement of her head. "Just sitting at his desk."

"Did you know that Mr. Gordon had a caller this afternoon?" Conniston proceeded.

"Yes, sir. I saw him going out—waiting for the elevator."

"How did you know where he'd been?"

"I'd seen him before. That was Thursday or Friday. Mr. Gordon came out with him, then, and they stood by the elevator, quarreling."

"Quarreling?"

"Yes, sir. I heard the other man say to Mr. Gordon that he was behaving like a fool."

"What more?"

"That's all," said Laura, with a faint smile. "I didn't wait to hear what Mr. Gordon would say."

"And you don't know what it was about?"

She shook her head. The inspector pondered, and Abbott knew that he was devising a trap.

"Well," said Conniston, "we've got reason to know that that man has taken Mr. Gordon's pocketbook, and we want a description of it. I'm told that you've seen it several times, so you're in a position to help us a good deal."

Laura looked up into Conniston's face, her lips a little apart, her big, gray eyes wide open. There was nothing in her countenance but a dim wonder that any one could have said such a thing, and a childish impulse of regret that she couldn't do what was expected of her.

"Why, no," said she, "I never saw it. I didn't know he had one."

Inwardly Abbott hugged himself, for he saw that the inspector was com-

pletely taken in—and no shame to his intelligence, either, for the lie was beyond admiration.

"Hum!" said Conniston. "You saw that man going away this afternoon. What were you doing then?"

"Putting the towels around. They always come from the laundry late on Mondays. It must have been about four o'clock."

"Towels? What did you do with Gordon's?"

"I laid them outside the door," she said. "I thought he was in, but he didn't answer when I knocked, so I left them there and went away."

"Are those the ones, on the bed?"

"I guess they are," said Laura. "They must be."

"Who brought them in?" The inspector raised his voice on this question, addressing all present, but no one answered.

"Did *you*?" he asked of Abbott.

"No."

"You?" Conniston pointed a finger at Rogowsky.

"No, sir." The tailor repeated his answer several times with diminishing force till the words died in his throat.

The little man seemed to be telling the truth, and there was no reason why he shouldn't, since he had already admitted having come into the room alone. The point was of extreme importance, and might be crucial in the case, as proving that Gordon was alive after his visitor's departure. This might not suffice to acquit "Jones" of the murder, but it would compel the police to show how he could have killed Gordon without being present, and how and why he had robbed the man before he was dead—if the two crimes should prove to be allied.

On the other hand, if the death should be found to have been natural or accidental, and the visitor be cleared of both murder and robbery, the latter crime would stand alone, and Laura's

freedom would depend almost wholly upon the strength of her own statement that she had not entered that room during the afternoon. She had, to some extent, laid herself open to suspicion; but, so far as Abbott could see, she had told the best story within the limits of possible substantiation. Her chief divergencies from the truth were safe and shrewd. No one except Abbott knew that she had seen Gordon's pocketbook; and it was more natural that she should have knocked at Gordon's door than that she should have merely left the towels there for him to find. Always avoid anything that needs explaining when you deal with the police.

"Where did you go after leaving those towels at the door?" the inspector asked.

"To Mr. Abbott's room. That was the last one. Then I went up on the roof, and stayed till supper time."

"Was any one else on the roof?"

"No, sir."

"Was Mr. Abbott in his room when you went there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you have any conversation with him?"

Laura did something imperceptible and indefinable which filled the room with silence. Then she said softly:

"I never talk with the guests."

And again every man exhaled a full breath.

"The blessed little liar!" said Abbott to himself, with all the enthusiasm of an artistic soul corrupted by delight in pure technique.

This closed Laura's examination, and she was dismissed. In passing out, she, for the first time, gave Abbott a full glance. It was not a message, but a deeply anxious inquiry, for her own sake alone, and to be answered by her own judgment. He supposed that she wanted to assure herself that he would support her story, and he was glad to note that she seemed satisfied, even

elated, by what she read in his countenance.

The valet was sent away, but Abbott was permitted to remain; and thus he saw the first thorough search of the room, including Gordon's baggage. Nothing was found which cast the smallest ray of light on the mystery, and, except for a single blank check of J. B. Chester & Co., bankers and brokers—a firm unknown to any one present—there was nothing which illuminated the business or social aspects of the life which had just been cut short. There was no bank book, but presumably the man had had an account with Chester & Co.

The scarcity of his belongings could hardly be fortuitous; it would seem that Gordon's errand in New York had required a measure of secrecy. If he had carried any documents, they must have been in his pocketbook. The papers in the room were only the unimportant and scanty accumulation of bills, memoranda, and advertising circulars incident to a two weeks' stay in a New York hotel.

When Abbott went away, satisfied that no discoveries would be made, the inspector was sitting under an electric lamp, engaged in an obviously futile study of the little, blackened saucer of steel.

CHAPTER III.

TWO BILLS AND A TYPEWRITTEN LINE.

The excitement and subsequent reaction did not tend to fit Abbott for the night's work that lay before him. Never in his life had he felt less like writing; and a dinner at a cheap restaurant depressed and dulled him still more; but the wretched story stood before him like the guillotine, and, with a groan, he gave his head to it.

Sounds from the hall, in the course of the evening, let him know that the body of Gordon was being taken away, presumably to an undertaker's, where

an examination would be made that evening, and an autopsy the following day. Snatches of conversation came to Abbott, exciting his curiosity, and he was twice interrupted to be interviewed—by telephone—but he stuck to his task and his typewriter, and turned out feverish fiction at the rate of three pages an hour.

He got along so well that at two o'clock, when he went out for crackers and milk and black coffee, he took the time to visit the West Forty-seventh Street station, where he met two reporters and a detective whom he knew. They told him that the Gordon case had not advanced one inch. J. B. Chester, head of the private banking firm, had denied that he knew the man. "Jones," the visitor, had not been traced. The mystery of the little steel saucer remained unsolved.

At six o'clock or thereabouts, when Abbott finished his story, in a state bordering on lunacy, he went out again and bought the latest edition of the morning papers. They contained singularly little beyond what he already knew. It seemed that neither the detectives nor the reporters had yet been able to get in touch with Gordon's friends, if he had any in the city. The cable had brought no information from London.

The sole surprise for him in these reports was that, with one exception, each of them was embellished with a portrait of Laura; and the pose was not always the same. He found three, in different papers, all apparently made from good photographs; and he wondered how they could have been obtained. He could hardly believe that the girl had been so foolish as to give them to reporters, or even that she had possessed them—that she had spent so much money as they must have cost. He had never suspected her of extravagance, or of precisely the weak kind of vanity which this seemed to reveal.

Maudlin with overwork, he felt an absurd sympathy mingling with his disapproval. If the poor child had wanted the pictures, he wished that he might have paid for them himself.

It was too bad that she had been made so conspicuous in connection with a criminal story, and that the attention of detectives and reporters should be drawn to her in this manner; but the harm was done, and the best antidote would be a quick solution of the Gordon case. "I'll get right into that game," he said to himself, "as soon as I've had two hours' sleep, and handed in my story."

Returning to the hotel after breakfast, he found a letter which had come in the early mail during his absence. The address was typed, not very well; the postmark was New York, the Grand Central Station.

Abbott noted these matters from the habit of observation, and without interest. He was much the worse for his night's work, half dead for sleep one minute, and wild with nervousness the next, fragments of the end of his pot-boiler galloping crazily through his mind and leaving vacancy behind them.

Expecting only an advertisement, he tore open the envelope while riding up in the elevator, alone except for the boy in charge of it, who saw only the familiar avalanche of floors and doors sliding down before his face. But Abbott saw something far less familiar; namely, two one-hundred-dollar bills, and he alighted at the seventh landing, broad awake.

The bills were folded in a sheet of paper which had seemed to be blank at the first hasty glance; but, in the privacy of his room, Abbott saw that it bore a typewritten line, as follows:

In payment of a debt which you have doubtless forgotten.

Precisely the same words had come to him once before, about six months

ago, with an inclosure of money, but there was a wide difference between the remittances, for the other had been the humble sum of seven dollars. On the previous occasion, after brief bewilderment, he had solved the riddle to his own satisfaction.

The sender, according to his theory, had been an elderly and acid woman at whose house he had been a table boarder in a spasm of economy, her charge being seven dollars. He had continued to reside at the St. Mark, and to eat four meals out of five at restaurants, meanwhile running up a bill at the boarding house. On the severance of these relations, a disagreement had arisen as to the amount due, and Abbott had paid seven dollars more than he owed. Presumably the woman had discovered the overcharge, through study of her accounts, and conscience had constrained her to refund the money, though she had sourly hidden this righteous deed behind the veil of anonymity.

But Abbott knew that there was no one in the world who owed him two hundred dollars. In purgatory—to speak charitably—there was a man who in life had done him out of about twice that sum, yet even if this individual's ghost had walked in the vicinity of the Grand Central Station during the night, there was nothing in his earthly record to indicate that he would have seized the opportunity to pay a debt. He had left a widow without a penny—a good woman; and if she had come into a fortune, it was conceivable that she might be trying to rectify her late husband's errors, but Abbott happened to have heard a little while ago that she was teaching school in her childhood's home in Oregon.

To suppose that the two hundred dollars had come from the same source as the seven would be mere madness, yet the exact repetition of the wording could not be a coincidence. Abbott had

told the story to a number of persons, but there was no reason why any of them should assist him, by stealth or openly.

Comparison of the two missives naturally suggested itself. He had saved the boarding-house keeper's letter as a curiosity, and he remembered having taken it out of his trunk by mistake, with other papers, in the early part of last week. What had he done with it?

By hard thinking, he recalled the exact procedure. He had separated it from the other documents, and had thrust it into the right hip pocket of the old tennis trousers which were a part of his working costume. He seemed to remember that the letter had been there yesterday or the day before, but now he failed to find it. The pocket held only a handkerchief.

If he had pulled out the letter accidentally, it should still be in the room—for Laura was the right sort, and never threw papers away. But it wasn't to be found, and Abbott was almost ready to believe that one of the detectives had nipped it from his pocket yesterday afternoon, in the hope that it might be a clue found in Gordon's room which Abbott was trying to suppress.

This suggested a trap, but if the police were laboring under the delusion that he had stolen Gordon's pocketbook, why should they send him more money? Perhaps they thought him too clever to be caught with the real plunder, and were trying to supply him with cash which he would dare to carry. They would arrest him with the two hundred dollars in his pocket, and then accuse him of having sent the anonymous letter to himself. But if this were the scheme, why hadn't they written the line and the address on his own typewriter while he was at dinner? They hadn't. The type was similar, but it wouldn't pass as identical; he satisfied himself of that by a test. Another instrument had been used.

Two hundred dollars was very near the sum he owed the St. Mark, and the implication was strong that this fact had been known to the sender. The police might have got the information from Mr. Rand, or directly from Abbott's bill, received yesterday. He remembered examining the week's vouchers for restaurant charges and telephone calls; these were in his wastebasket now, but the bill itself wasn't there, or anywhere else in the room. It had disappeared.

Abbott could not recall what he had done with it, but he was forced to the conclusion that it had been taken from his pocket with the letter, or from his room by the detective who had searched it after the discovery that Gordon had been robbed.

Possibly the detective himself had stolen the wallet, and had sacrificed a part of his spoil to lay the crime on another man's shoulders; but Abbott could not see in his mind's eye a bold and thrifty member of the force separating himself from two hundred dollars in that manner. Moreover, Abbott had kept his eyes wide open while in Gordon's room, and he felt reasonably sure that no trick had been turned. His firm opinion was that the pocketbook had departed before the police arrived.

Then he was the victim of an authorized "frame-up," intended to force a confession from him. It seemed utterly absurd. Did they suppose he had got into Gordon's room and out again, after the man's death and before the valet's discovery of the body?

Abbott turned these matters over in his mind until his wrath got the better of his reason. Why should he wear out his own shoe leather and Mr. Rand's rug walking the floor with questions to which Inspector Conniston knew the answer? Ten red-hot minutes with Conniston would be better than ten hours of this perambulation. Abbott prided himself on a cool head, but he

would have had trouble in recalling any instance when it had detained him from personal contact with an adversary.

"I'll blow this game wide open," he said to himself. "That's the way to handle it."

CHAPTER IV.

THE POISON GAS.

Abbott jammed his hat on, and got as far as the door, where he stopped, with his hand on the knob. Suppose he were mistaken; suppose this were not a police frame-up; what would happen? Unquestionably the police would infer that the anonymous letter had come from the person who had stolen the money. They would ask how that person could have known so much about Abbott's affairs, and have access to his room to get the documents now missing. Suspicion would instantly fall on the valet and Laura, with the girl in very much the worse position. It would even be possible to suspect that she was trying, in a frantic and foolish way, to bribe Abbott to conceal anything he might know that was unfavorable to her.

He stood there wondering why he himself had not suspected something of the sort. If it were conceivable that the money had been sent to him in the way of kindness, Laura was the only person on earth who could have sent it. If what he had seemed to detect yesterday were true—if the girl cared for him—she might have yielded to a wild impulse to help him. But the childish folly of the act surpassed belief. If she hadn't told him about seeing Gordon's money, if her opportunity to take it were not so plain, or even if she had waited till the robbery was cold, this might look plausible, but in the face of the facts she must have been insane or idiotic to have done such a thing. And Abbott smiled, remembering Laura's scene with the inspector. Certainly that performance had not revealed any

mental weakness, but, on the contrary, had gone far to obliterate Abbott's previous notions of the girl as unstable and scatterbrained.

That single exhibition of cleverness would not save her, however. The police may blunder and be deceived, and still attain their end, but a suspected person has to be clever all the time, for a single lapse may be fatal. Theorizing about the money had not shaken Abbott's conviction that Laura was wholly innocent; nevertheless, she was in danger, and there was a chance that what he had been about to do, for his own safety and to gratify a pugnacious instinct, would turn the hunt in her direction. Perception of this possibility sufficed to halt him in his tracks.

While he stood with his hand on the doorknob there came a soft knock, as with the tips of one's fingers. This must be Laura, and her manner of announcing herself meant caution. He opened the door noiselessly and made a sign that she should come in. She shook her head and walked slowly backward into Gordon's room, from which it was apparent that she had just come. She had been setting it to rights, all alone, seemingly undisturbed by the thoughts of the recent tragedy.

He followed her into the room, and nearly to the spot where the dead man's head had lain.

"I've found something here," she said. "I didn't know what to do about it, and I thought perhaps you'd tell me. It's hanging on the side of the little cupboard."

He passed her and entered the bathroom. Over the porcelain washing bowl was a cabinet with a mirror in its door. Abbott knew that it had been empty yesterday, for he had seen it searched. Gordon's few toilet articles had been on the shelf under it, which now was bare.

A space perhaps three inches wide was between the side of the cabinet and

the partition wall. Abbott put his hand into this niche and took out a small, white packet which had been shielded from view by the cabinet's projecting edge, and held by a pin driven into the wood. It bore a printed label:

Bicarbonate of soda. Two ounces. Ten cents. H. E. Hardwick, druggist.

It had been opened at one end, and then skewered together with a very small pin, like that by which it had been suspended. The contents looked like honest bicarbonate of soda. No more than a teaspoonful had been used.

"How did you happen to find this?" Abbott asked.

"I knocked it down while I was dusting," she said. "Then I pinned it up again, just as it was before."

Abbott knew that he ought to do the same thing, and then notify the police; but he was indisposed to put his foot any farther into this case without more light. He disliked to be the person to report this discovery; he doubted that it would be safe to let Laura do so; but, on the other side, there was risk for both of them in concealing it.

Laura had instinctively copied his attitude of anxious meditation, and, with corrugated brow, she stood frowning at her empty hand, held out precisely as he was holding his with the packet in it.

"How long could this have been here?" he asked.

"I don't know," she said. "I can't remember when I dusted that place. Maybe a week ago. Don't you think we'd better take that into your room?" she added. "Somebody might come."

She moved lightly away, and he followed her; and fastened his door with a bolt against pass-keys before resuming discussion.

"Why should anybody hide bicarbonate of soda?" Laura said. "That's ridiculous, of course. I'll bet it's some kind of a drug that Mr. Gordon took,

and he kept it in that envelope to fool people, if he should leave it lying around. Naturally he wouldn't want anybody to know that he had such a habit."

"That's a good theory, my young friend," Abbott admitted, "but how do we prove it?"

"I think he used that little iron thing," she said, "the one they found in his hand. They say it was blackened. Probably you have to burn this powder—something like smoking opium. Would it be safe for us to burn just a small bit, and see if it smells funny?"

"Oh, safe enough," he said; "yet I guess I won't monkey with this stuff myself. I'll take it to a friend of mine who's a doctor and a chemist, and mighty well up on poisons. Wait a minute."

He went to the telephone and tried to get into communication with his friend, but the man was out, and was not expected home till late in the afternoon.

"Do you know any one else?" Laura asked.

He shook his head. There was no other scientific person whom he cared to trust in so delicate a matter as the secret analysis of a drug that might have been the instrument of murder.

"As to your notion, Laura," he said, "I doubt that this powder, if burned, would develop any odor. I didn't notice any yesterday. Of course, there'd probably been quite a time for it to drift away, and the bathroom window was raised a little." He stared into the open end of the packet, and then held it toward Laura. "I shouldn't know it wasn't bicarbonate of soda. Should you?"

"I'd say it wasn't," she responded doubtfully. "Let's try it in water."

She brought half a glassful, and he took up some of the powder on the

blade of his penknife and dropped it in. It sank heavily in tiny globules, and remained on the bottom of the glass, insoluble.

"There," said Laura, "now we know what it isn't. I'll bet I was exactly right about the whole matter."

Abbott took the glass from her hand.

"What killed Gordon?" he said. "An overdose? Then who got the pocket-book?"

"Well," said she, with hesitation, "there's Mr. Jones. It's awful to say such things, but he *may* have mixed something else with this powder—some queer kind of poison—on the sly, knowing that Mr. Gordon would take a dose, and die before he found out that his money was gone."

The wailing voice of the housekeeper was heard in the hall, calling Laura.

"Oh!" A shudder ran over the girl. "Wasn't that just like a ghost? And in the midst of all these horrors!" She gave him a somewhat pallid smile. "I must go. She'll guess where I am."

She ran to the door and stood, listening, till she heard Mrs. Ayre go into the opposite room; then she escaped, unseen and as silently as if she herself were a ghost. A moment later, Abbott heard her speak some distance down the hall:

"Did you call me, Mrs. Ayre?"

The perfection of the tone, its naturalness and accuracy of value, the suggestion of movement that it conveyed, so that the hearer could positively see Laura coming in answer to a summons—these little niceties of innocent deception did not escape Abbott's appreciative notice. Certainly the girl was clever in more ways than one. She had probably made a shrewd guess at the inwards of this Gordon affair.

Abbott took up the drinking glass, meaning to wash it before he did anything else. The little sodden lumps seemed undiminished, yet the water had

undergone a slight change, more noticeable when viewed against the light. It was reddened, as if a drop or two of blood were mingled with it. The powder would not dissolve, however, for all his efforts, and he decided that the red tinge must be due to some impurity, some element inseparable that had the color of blood.

He cleansed the glass thoroughly, thinking, with disappointment, of his failure to make arrangements for an analysis. The delay was unfortunate; it would tend to complicate any explanations he might subsequently have to make to the police. Moreover, he would like to have at least a hint as to the toxic properties of this substance to guide his immediate conduct in the affair. He had weak faith in his own power to draw valuable inferences from rude chemical tests, and yet he could not resist the temptation to try the experiment which Laura had put into his mind.

He took up a very small quantity of the powder on the end of his knife-blade and held a lighted match beneath it, vaguely expecting a miniature explosion, for he was still mindful of the sound which had preceded Gordon's death.

The powder jumped off, startling him, but the next moment he realized that this had been due to a slight moisture on the blade, and not to any explosive quality of the drug. He tried again, and nothing whatever happened, so far as he could observe in the dazzle of the flame. The powder did not melt, flare up, nor char.

Perhaps a little more heat might be required, and he lighted two matches at once for another trial. He had kept his head well out of the way, to escape poisonous fumes which might be unpleasant even from so small a sample of the drug; but the absence of odor, or of any sign of change, had relaxed

his caution. He bent his head slowly toward the blade.

When a man falls from a height and retains consciousness throughout the descent, there is one last unimaginable moment of horror in which the whole earth rushes up and hurls its vast bulk against him. That was what Abbott experienced in a kind of dream. He fell from a mile's altitude against the granite foundation of the world. The ultimate shock was too brief for physical pain. Surprise, terror, confused regrets, and mental agonies—these were unnaturally prolonged; but the dream's end, the shattering of his breast like glass, was accomplished before it could be apprehended.

Of what actually took place—the instant paralysis of every muscle in his body, so that he struck the floor like a weight of wet sand—he knew nothing whatever. Virtually he had died standing up, in the single moment when that vapor entered his lungs.

There had closed over him a film of the eternal silence; his first conscious impression was of breaking through into the realm of sounds. These were exaggerated as if by contrast into a meaningless and terrifying roar, above which slowly rose the clamor of his own heart. It seemed to have leaped from the wreckage of his body and to be beating unshielded. He was aware of struggling to rise, of getting to his knees, of clutching at his breast. The dream of that last hideous instant had returned, and, panic-stricken, he was searching for intolerable wounds.

The truth began to mingle with illusion, and gradually his mind cleared. He knew what had happened; knew that he had escaped Gordon's fate by a hair's breadth. Trembling, dizzy, and drenched in cold sweat, he stood erect after much striving, and turned instinctively toward the door.

"Laura!" he gasped. "I'm all right. Don't be frightened, little girl."

CHAPTER V.

THE REPORTERS ON THE TRAIL.

The idea of having fallen with tremendous violence still possessed him; he thought dozens of people must have heard the noise of it, and that Laura would have guessed the cause. He imagined her already at the door, having knocked while he was unconscious, perhaps having fainted from fright. But when he had stumbled to the door and looked out, the ugly, commonplace, deserted hall insulted him with its indifference. He had entertained larger notions of his catastrophe.

He staggered back into the room. The windows were wide open; it was impossible there should be any danger now; but his eyes persisted in scouting about in the air, as if some horrible thing would be visible, floating in it. Meanwhile, his mind, not yet completely awake, was dreamily considering the peculiarly infernal nature of the death trap from which he had so narrowly escaped.

If he had died, Laura would have found his body—a cruel shock, at the least of it. She would have grieved for him, missed him, if no more than that. Certainly she would have blamed herself, and that was not the whole of it, possibly not the worst. If she had told the truth about the drug, she might not have been believed. The police would have been very reluctant to admit that they had failed to find a thing so simply hidden and so vital to the case. They would have accused Laura of having found it in Gordon's pocketbook.

Laura would have been quite shrewd enough to foresee this; she might not have dared to confess any knowledge of the poison. Then what would have been the inevitable inference as to Stanley Abbott—dead of the same drug that had killed Gordon, with an unexplained supply of it in his possession, and with that money in his pocket, possibly a part

of the sum that had been stolen? If the real thief could cunningly have brought about such a consummation, how neat a trick it would have been, and how safe the clever scoundrel's position.

Abbott thought of his play, and wondered whether Laura would have had the wit to see that no one stole it. Possibly she knew its value from her own perusal. She might easily have read it on the sly; women have so little conscience about such matters, and the drawer in which he kept it had no very formidable lock. Laura might long since have opened it with a hairpin. He didn't care. What would have worried him, in the hereafter, was the thought that the play had passed to his uncle, who never, on his own initiative, would produce it.

But Laura was another pair of shoes, an appreciative and canny little girl. She'd do something with the piece, if it were hers. Now that the thing was virtually finished, it had become property; he ought to make a will. He would leave the play to Laura. Death had suddenly assumed a visible and imminent reality for this healthy young man. It seemed rather absurd to make Laura his heir, but whom did he like better? The thought of her loss in his death had given him a feeling of responsibility toward her, a sense of unwillingness to break the fragile bond between them. He would never go away and leave her without a friend; he would put her in a better sort of life, if there were any decent way to do it, as soon as he was able.

He roused his wandering mind from these dreams. "I'd better be thinking how I'll keep the poor kid from knowing what I did to myself with her experiment," he muttered. "She's likely to come at any minute, and I probably look like a corpse."

He viewed his face in a mirror, and saw it of a grayish pallor, the per-

spiration glistening on his two days' growth of sandy beard. A hasty dash of cold water and some brisk rubbing made him look more human, and refreshed him besides. Except for occasional swift pangs that ran along the seams of his skull, he was right enough, so he told himself; and at this trifling expense he had gained a certainty as to the cause of Gordon's death. The exact manner of it was still in doubt, and the gravest question of all remained unanswered—whether the man had died by his own carelessness or by an enemy's contrivance. The latter seemed much the more probable, but how the trick had been worked was beyond Abbott's ingenuity to guess.

He found his knife where it had fallen on the typewriter table. The powder had vanished from the blade. It might have been vaporized in that last lethal moment, or so small a quantity might have been dispersed beyond detection when the knife fell.

Abbott wiped the blade which the flame had blued. He folded up the packet, pinned the end as it had been at first, and considered carefully what he should do with it. To carry it all day long would involve too great a risk. Eventually he picked the lock of the telephone transmitter and tucked the packet in without disturbing the mechanism; and he had barely stowed it away when Laura knocked, this time in her usual manner, precise and businesslike.

It came to his mind that perhaps she would better not know where the poison was; and he called to her, "Just a minute!" while hurrying to fasten the door of the telephone box. The little lock was obstinate, and Laura stood outside the door for two full minutes before he let her in. She entered, bright and smiling.

"Oh, I'm glad you're here!" she said. "I was afraid you might have gone out while I was hid."

"Hid!" said he. "What for?"

"A reporter was after me. They told him in the office that I wasn't here to-day, but he knew better, and hung around. The elevator boys were ordered not to bring him up, and two porters watched the stairs. He paid one of the porters to look the other way, and then gave a dollar to Evangelinus Apostolides—the Greek elevator boy they call Little Eva, with a scar across his nose. He said he'd take the man up next trip; and then he came and told me about it. So Little Eva got the dollar, and no harm done—as he thinks. I hid in a vacant room till he brought me word that the reporter had given me up. Not that I cared; I'd just as soon have seen him, but they didn't want me to."

"I'm glad you didn't," said Abbott. "You'd better talk only to me, as far as possible. And, of course," he added impressively, remembering what he conceived to be her failing, "you and I will tell each other the exact truth."

Her lips fell apart, and her eyes opened wider. She looked up at him with surprise.

"Why, yes," she said; "I hope so. Did you do anything more with that powder?"

When a man vows mutual veracity with a woman, he considers only the handle on his own side of the jug. The idea that the obligation could embarrass him had never entered Abbott's mind. While he was trying to adjust his honor to the situation, Laura's big, childish eyes regarded him steadily.

"You did," she said; "and you weren't going to tell me. Why not?"

"Well, it's dangerous stuff, Laura," he said laboriously. "I didn't want to frighten you——"

She made a funny little gesture of annoyance.

"Do you wish to remind me that I'm the maid?"

"Good heavens; no!"

"Then please don't spare my feelings. It's a practice I've always associated with an odor of boiled dinner in somebody's sitting room. When my father and I had troubles worse than ordinary—and that meant pretty bad, toward the last—we used to play we were a king and a princess, and then we'd discuss our affairs as calmly and beautifully as Charles the First had his head cut off."

Abbott knew her, and the old-fashioned Yankee character, well enough to perceive that she was reaching out after general principles and a light style of expression because her real feeling was too sharply personal and too serious. She had been studying him with increasing anxiety, marking those sudden gasps and bodily tremors which he was finding it harder and harder to control, for every nerve within him seemed to be waking to its individual memory of the drug's appalling assault. He feared to lose her confidence, if he should give too mild a version of his adventure; and in the end she got something very close to the truth, but he put his own carelessness conspicuously in the foreground, where it would cover as well as possible the fact that her suggestion had nearly been the death of him.

"Nobody takes that powder in the way of habit; not in its present form," said he, and shuddered to his heels. "One whiff of it—but I've told you all about that. And I'm not hurt in the least." The words came a bit unsteadily, for at that moment an invisible demon stabbed him through the breastbone with a barbed dart.

She lifted her hands, as if with unsuppressible tenderness, then covered her face with them; but before he could respond with voice or gesture she met his eyes again and held him in his place.

"There; I'm all right," she said. "But I wish I'd thrown that terrible stuff away. Where is it?"

"You'd better not know. Let's for-

get that you ever saw this powder or heard of its existence. There's a risk here, and it's properly mine, not yours. I found that poison, do you understand? The door of that room was open, and I went in. You weren't there."

"Hurrah for the unvarnished truth!" said Laura. "What are we doing this for?"

"For money," he replied. "There's not only an exclusive story to sell; there's a bare possibility of pulling down a reward. We don't know who Gordon really was. He may have been a person of consequence. Anyhow, whatever I get, we divide, share and share alike."

"The Abbott-Caverly Company, dealers in mystery and poison," said she. "What must I do to earn my part?"

"Why, the first thing is to be sure that Gordon was alive after Jones went away. I heard what you told the inspector; but, of course, you *might* have put those towels into the room without discovering what had happened."

"Never in the world," she said. "I should have gone straight to hang them up where they belong, as I always do. I left them outside the door, and Mr. Gordon must have taken them in."

"I'd like to know how he came to his death all by himself," said Abbott. "This drug isn't taken internally; it has to be heated. I've proved that to my own satisfaction, and then some. The dose that killed Gordon was heated in that little steel saucer, beyond a doubt; but will you tell me where he got the heat? He left nothing to show for it; no burned matches, no ash of any sort. There's no gas in the room, and, anyhow, he wouldn't have had time to turn it out. He died before he could have thrown the smallest thing away or have hidden any appliance, no matter how simple."

"I see," said Laura. "Somebody

must have removed something. But how can that be? It would be silly to consider the valet, and except for him you were the first person in the room after Mr. Gordon died."

"Yes," said he, nodding. "And unfortunately the police may think of that, when I turn this infernal stuff over to them. That's why I want to know a little more about the case before I do it."

He glanced uneasily toward the telephone box where the poison was concealed; and, as if in magical response, the bell startled him with a summons.

The operator at the switchboard below said, "Mr. Berry calling." The name did not bring any person's image to Abbott's memory. It was possible that Mr. Berry might be the reporter who had vainly pursued Laura, but Abbott did not care to reveal a knowledge of that matter by asking questions.

"Have him wait," said he. "I'll be right down."

When he turned from the telephone he saw Laura with a small panel photograph and his scissors.

"It's my picture," she said, responding to his glance. "Did you see those that were in the papers?"

The rush of other puzzles had driven that one out of his mind.

"Yes," said he. "Where did they get them?"

"The detectives took them out of my trunk when they searched my room; but they didn't get this, because I hid it beforehand. It's the only one I have that was taken in the old days." And she began to cut it with the scissors.

"Hold on!" he cried, thinking she meant to destroy it. "Let me see it, Laura."

The steel blades clicked. She held out the card to him, retaining a strip which she had cut off the bottom. This she tore into small pieces. Doubtless it had borne the photographer's name.

"Where was this taken?" he asked.

"At home," said she, after a moment's pause.

"Horton's Harbor," said Abbott, and turned his attention to the photograph.

Assuredly the girl was a wonderful subject for the camera. The newspaper cuts, though poorly printed, had revealed the merit of their originals; and this little panel from the studio of some starveling in a Maine-coast town possessed amazing excellence as a portrait, the pose exquisite, the expression full of character and charm.

"I was two years younger, then," said Laura, "and eleven pounds heavier. I'd never worked in a New York hotel, nor taken a reducing diet for any other reason. You'll notice the difference."

She assumed the same pose for him, the light striking her face exactly right. He thought her more beautiful than the picture, with more of value, more of unity and clearness; yet the work of the rustic photographer was unimpeached by the comparison.

"This is mighty good," said Abbott. "There must have been an artist in Horton's Harbor."

She slowly changed the pose and looked at him, with a broadening smile.

"Maybe there was," said she. "They're born in queer places."

"Why did you cut off his professional card?"

"Oh," said she lightly, "some one might get hold of this. I always say I'm from Portland; that's where I worked before I came to New York. I never mentioned Horton's Harbor to anybody but you, and I'm surprised that you remembered the name. Please don't tell."

"All right," said he, thinking she might be afraid that the Gordon case would cause inquiries to be made in her former home, if the reporters or police should learn where it was; but he wondered why she had gone so far as to

mutilate this card which no one would be likely to see.

She did not enlighten him. She took the photograph from his hand and restored it to whatever place of concealment it had previously occupied while he was busy making a parcel of his story. Then, seeing that he was ready to go, she let him open the door for her, and made a very pretty exit in the manner of a sedate young woman in real society. Her graceful image lingered in Abbott's mind all the way down in the elevator, and he seemed to see Laura walk out of the car ahead of him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE THEATRICAL MIX-UP.

The man who had called was Herbert Barry, not Berry, a pleasant, gentlemanly fellow connected with the dramatic department of the newspaper which Abbott had last served. It was impossible that this should be the person who had wasted a dollar on the wily Evangelinus Apostolides, and Abbott did not take the trouble to inquire. He had always liked Barry, and been sorry that he got no advancement; he was still a gatherer of minor news about the show business, going the rounds of theaters and producers' offices, and sifting the rubbish sent in by press agents.

Barry seemed somewhat startled and even grieved by Abbott's appearance—which was growing worse every minute—and his conventional inquiry as to the state of his friend's health had too much genuine solicitude in its tone. "I must be advertising that knock-out," said Abbott to himself. "It won't do." And he explained to Barry that an all-night session with a story had put him a little to the bad, but otherwise he was in the pink of condition.

"Fiction, eh?" said Barry. "Not this Gordon case? That's what I'm on, though it's so far out of my line. I believe I've seen this girl." He held

up a newspaper folded so as to make Laura's portrait prominent. "Is that good of her?"

"Pretty fair," Abbott admitted.

"I saw her in Joe Lobert's office Wednesday of last week," said Barry. "She was looking for a job." And he shook inwardly with laughter.

Joe Lobert is a well-known theatrical producer.

"This is queer," said Abbott. "But what's the *real* joke, as you see it?"

"Nothing unpleasant," Barry responded; "and if my story's going to hurt her, I'll forget it. I haven't mentioned it to anybody yet. The joke is that Lobert thought she was loaded with money; he virtually told me so, and asked me if I could find out anything about her. She'd got away without discussing her private affairs, and had given him no address except one of the agencies. She was dressed mighty well—that perfectly quiet style; I wondered that Lobert should have noticed it, but he did. He figured her to be a girl with solid backing, one who might show up later with a play and a business proposition."

"With a play," said Abbott softly, and he laughed from sheer nervousness. "What did Lobert say to her?"

"He was interested; got her to read a scene out of something that he happened to have—all cast, of course, and nothing in it for her, but he didn't tell her so. He said to me that she'd be good in emotional stuff, with the right direction;" and Barry lifted up his hands to heaven. "He said she had a fine voice, and seemed to know how to act. He was really anxious to find out who she was, but I suppose he forgot all about it, ten minutes later. That's the way with those people. Perhaps he'll remember, when he sees this morning's papers, and have a fainting spell. What do you make of it?"

"Why, nothing," said Abbott, "except that the girl's stage-struck, and wants

to get on the boards. She's saved her money and bought one good dress; and there you are. She may be an undeveloped Bernhardt, for all we know, but what good will it do her?"

"None, of course, so far as acting is concerned," Barry assented. "But she's so pretty, you know, and so much of a type, that she might get an engagement and a salary. That would be better than what she's doing now—unless she's the real thing, as you have ventured to suggest. In that case her heart's bound to be broken, anyway. Why not work up a little advertising game out of this case, and see if we can't land her somewhere?"

Abbott tried to think—no easy task for his tormented head. Unpleasant as the Gordon case was, and so unpromising in the way that Barry thought to use it, still there was a possibility that this might be Laura's chance. If the affair could be quickly and thoroughly cleared up, so that Laura should stand unmistakably apart from all its criminal features, it might be possible to give her temporary advertising which would be helpful, as the world goes. Her present employment could be shuffled to one side; a fictitious popular romance could be created from such scanty material as her early life afforded, or even out of nothing. Then she could be launched upon the stage, for better or for worse, and it was possible that she might have the luck or the cleverness to make a pecuniary success.

But on the other hand the Gordon case, as it stood, was far too dangerous, and Laura already too conspicuous in connection with it. If the police should make a flat failure, and the mystery never be solved, if the man known as Jones should clear himself completely, Laura would stand nearer to the center of suspicion than any other person, and she might never be able to dispel the doubt.

Abbott was thinking of the robbery. So far as Laura was concerned, that was a far worse ingredient than the murder. It was possible that Gordon's death might be explained, and yet his money never be found. No; it certainly would not do to play any advertising tricks with an affair of this sort, in its present state.

"I'm glad you're Bert Barry, and nobody else," Abbott said, "because another fellow might misunderstand me in more ways than one. I have felt an interest in this young woman since yesterday. Before that, I really hadn't noticed that she was much out of the ordinary, except in looks. So far as it may be proper for me to interfere I want to do what is best for her; and I feel that her name ought to be suppressed as much as possible, at this time, and not pushed forward. And I'm going to ask you, as a real kindness to me, to hold this story of yours for the present. Some one else may spring it; but, on the other hand, it may not get to the newspaper offices till the interest is dead. Will you do this for me?"

"Why, of course I will!" said Barry. "And I doubt if it'll come out. Joe Lobert's in Buffalo to-day with some kind of a freak summer try-out that's opening there, and I think nobody else in his office noticed Miss Caverly enough to remember her. I'm sure she hasn't been around much, perhaps nowhere else. So if the agency doesn't leak, it'll be all right."

He rose, and they walked toward the door, and paused there, though it was Abbott's intention to go on as far as their ways might coincide. In the better light, Barry scanned Abbott's face with renewed anxiety.

"There's no chance of any trouble, is there?" he asked. "For her, I mean? I suppose that man Jones did the whole job, and it seems out of the question that he should get away with it."

Abbott shook his head doubtfully.

"It was a strange and crazy piece of work, if he did it. Yet I can't see anybody else."

"Nor I," said Barry, offering his hand; and at that moment a man who had quietly come up behind them out of the hotel touched Abbott on the shoulder. It was Inspector Conniston.

"Abbott," said he, "I'd like a word with you, when you're at liberty. Don't let me hurry you, Mr. Barry."

CHAPTER VII.

THE GIRL'S RECORD.

Barry took the gentle hint and departed. The inspector led Abbott to the St. Mark's little reception room, went in, and took a position beside the door and close to the wall, where he could not be seen by any one who passed through the lobby. He stationed Abbott in the doorway.

"Do you know a reporter named Muller?" Conniston asked.

"Frank Muller? Yes; I know him well."

"Keep a lookout for him," said the inspector. "He's been here, and he's coming back. He tried to interview our friend"—pointing with his thumb toward the ceiling—"but I'd told Rand not to let anybody see her."

"Do you mean Laura Caverly?"

"Yes," said Conniston. "Muller's working up a story about her, and I want to find out what it is and stop it, if I can. I don't want any reckless, injurious fakes printed about that girl."

"But Muller's the most decent little chap in the world," said Abbott, to whom the mention of this man's name had brought surprise and relief. "Why do you assume that his story'll be injurious?"

"He thinks he's got hold of something in her record."

"Her record!" Abbott tried not to show too grave an interest. "She's

hardly old enough to have one. Have you looked her up at all?"

"I wired Portland last night, as a matter of form," said Conniston. "That's where she hails from. I got a report that she had worked for six months in a hotel there, and that her reputation was *AT*. Her home was in a little town called Horton's Harbor, and she was in good circumstances till her father lost his money and died. Seems queer that a girl of her quality shouldn't have relatives who'd take care of her. Perhaps Muller's found out something to account for that—or thinks he has. It's up to you to get it out of him, Mr. Abbott."

"But Muller won't tell me anything, except on my word of honor to regard it as confidential," Abbott said. "If he's got a story, it's important and exclusive. I doubt whether he'll tell me, anyhow."

Conniston studied him intently; in fact, from the beginning of the conversation Abbott had been aware of scrutiny and of the inspector's surprise and perplexity as he took note of the uncontrollable nervousness, the pallor, and the strained and desperate expression which the shock of that infernal vapor had imprinted on his countenance.

"I've been at work all night," Abbott said irritably, unable to endure in silence this acute inspection. "I had to finish a story. Loaded myself with black coffee and wrote six thousand words. I'm rather shaky to-day."

"You sure are," said Conniston, with emphasis; "but a night's work didn't do it—not to a big, rugged young man like you. Have you let yourself in bad on this Gordon case? Suppressed a piece of evidence, perhaps?"

"You're accusing me of a crime, you know," Abbott retorted.

"Not if you turn it over to me," said Conniston. "I'll take the crime out of it, provided that it wasn't done in your

own interest—and I know it wasn't. If you've acted recklessly on that girl's account, you're not shielding a guilty person. She's innocent, not only in this affair, but clear back to her cradle. I've had long experience; I know when to trust my judgment. If it's proved to me that she's ever done anything seriously wrong, I'll hand in my tin." He touched his coat where he would have worn his badge had he been in uniform.

"I noticed you yesterday while I was questioning her," the inspector continued. "Anybody might have been interested, but not quite the way you were. You showed up well; your attitude toward her was that of a gentleman. You're a college-bred man, of fine family, I'm told; and she's at present only a maid in this hotel; but when I saw the sympathy and respect and admiration that you felt for her, I said to myself, 'There's one young man who isn't a fool; a young man who recognizes blood and character when he sees them.'"

It was a strange harangue to come from an officer of police, but it bore every mark of sincerity. Abbott was almost, yet not altogether, persuaded. If he had had a story ready, if he had rehearsed one with Laura, and had bound her to deny all connection with the finding of the poison, he might have taken this opportunity to abandon the dangerous policy of concealment which would become doubly hazardous through rejection of Conniston's advances. As the matter stood, he did not dare to make the bolder decision; and he temporized.

"I'm perfectly willing to admit my interest in this young woman," he responded; "and I thank you for the way in which you have spoken of it. But I'm not anticipating anything worse for her than the usual outpouring of newspaper slush. The way to stop that is to clear up the case. Where's this mys-

terious man Jones? Why is he keeping out of sight?"

"There's no mystery about Jones, and he isn't hiding," Conniston rejoined. "I have an appointment with him at one o'clock. He's vouched for by people very high up."

"What do they say about him?"

"His name's Edward R. Jones. He's a Welsh-Englishman who has spent most of his life in Italy, though he's still a British subject, the consul tells me. Just what his business has been I don't know. Gordon met him in California, and they came East together. I judge that Gordon meant to put some money into the other man's game."

"I don't see anything in this that lets Jones out," said Abbott. "Do you bank entirely on what the consul says?"

"I bank largely on your evidence and Laura's," Conniston rejoined. "Her story about the towels proves that Gordon was alive after Jones left. And yours corroborates it. You saw the man going away. Did he hurry? Do you think he was fooling around in the hall trying to pick up a nickel for his car fare, while any minute a maid might come along and go into Gordon's room and find him murdered? Or if Gordon was then alive, and Jones had stolen the pocketbook, having fixed up the poison to work later, do you think he'd have lost much time getting out of the hotel?"

"We don't know what he picked up," Abbott reminded him. "It might have been something that would have sent him to the chair."

"Tell me this," Conniston said. "If Jones went to that room and either robbed or murdered Gordon—went there openly, sending up his name; a man with such connections as he seems to have, and one whose relations with Gordon were well known to many—was his act rational, from any point of view? Don't you understand? There's no plan, no precaution, to cover any-

thing up. If Laura, after seeing Jones in the hall, had gone right in with her towels and found the body and screamed, calling you and half a dozen other men in, what chance would Jones have had? Leaving the murder out of it, what was to prevent Gordon from missing his pocketbook immediately? Wouldn't he have known who took it, and raised a row by telephone?"

"It requires explanation, I'll admit."

"The explanation," said the inspector, "will be that somebody went into that room after Jones left and did the trick. There's every reason to believe that Gordon was killed for his money, that the robbery wasn't incidental; it was the motive. I think the man was dead when his pocketbook was taken. Considering what was in it, I guess Gordon looked out to see that it didn't get away—not while he lived."

"What *was* in it? Have you found out?"

"Yes," Conniston answered, after an instant's hesitation. "I got the facts from J. B. Chester, of Chester & Co. He's a nobody, and his firm is a dummy organized to handle shady war business for big dogs under cover. You couldn't prove it, though. He wouldn't tell, of course, and his word is no good, anyhow. But I can rely on the information I got."

"Did he tell you who Gordon really was?"

"Just himself. He used to be a captain in the British army; and for two or three years he's been in China, representing big English-American interests. About a month ago a deposit of thirty thousand dollars was made to Gordon's credit with Chester & Co. Gordon was then in California, and five hundred dollars was sent to him, to pay his fare, I suppose. When he reached New York he drew three hundred dollars more. Yesterday he checked out the whole balance."

"Twenty-nine thousand two hun-

dred," Abbott said; and the two one-hundred-dollar bills in the inside pocket of his waistcoat seemed to be hot. "Do you know what form it was in?"

"American money; that's all Chester could tell me when I saw him," said Conniston. "I'll get the denominations of the bills later, and perhaps the numbers. The money, I'm informed, was a commission on some kind of bunko that Gordon put over on the Chinamen. That part of it cuts no figure. This crime has no past; it all happened yesterday. Somebody found out that Gordon had the cash, and went after it."

Abbott started to speak, but checked the utterance, at the same time warning Conniston with a gesture.

"Muller's on the steps," he said softly. "He's talking with another reporter from the same paper. Probably Muller's in charge of the whole Gordon story. He won't tell me anything without the strictest possible pledge——"

"He can't bind you with regard to something you know already," Conniston interposed, in a voice so earnest and so kind that Abbott stared at him in wonder. "If this little girl has con-

fided anything to you, it's probably the same story."

"But she hasn't," Abbott protested.

"Perhaps she will," said Conniston. "What I dread is some similar case that she's been innocently concerned in; and if that is it, she'll need our protection. Do you *want* to help her? Or are you worried about yourself, for one reason or another? I'll know by the way you handle Muller. Now show me, Abbott. Go after that fellow, and find out what he's got."

It seemed impossible to Abbott that any good should come of this. How could he establish confidential relations with the police? He had seen men sent to the chair on less evidence than he was hiding in his pocket and in his room. As to the drug, he was now more than ever determined to conceal Laura's relation to the finding of it. Conniston was probably sincere in his desire to protect her, and in his declaration that she was innocent, but the net effects of what he had said was that Abbott was ten times as gravely alarmed on her account as he had been before. On the matter of her safety he would not trust anybody.

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE MAY 7TH POPULAR.



CORRECTING AN ERROR

D. HASTING MacADAM, who is a press agent for several branches of the United States government, and also enjoys the distinction of being the most absent-minded man in the Western Hemisphere, went to New York not long ago to investigate some of the governmental activities in that city.

One morning he and a friend got on a surface car to go downtown. MacAdam, being in haste to extend the hospitality of the street car to his companion, leaped upon the platform, thrust a quarter into the slot of the pay-as-you-enter, and lurched into the car.

"You made a mistake," his breathless friend informed him. "You dropped a quarter into the slot, when it should have been only a dime for the two of us."

"Oh, did I?" returned MacAdam. "Excuse me."

Then he went back and dropped an additional ten cents into the slot.

H a z i n g D a i s y

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "The Wall Between," "The Stroke Oar," Etc.

A lively afternoon with Bob Sedgwick at Weatherby College for Women. If you have a preconceived idea that women's colleges are tame, this will undeceive you

STORIES of the campus are presumed to concern themselves with the exploits of muscular or blithesome young men, overlooking the fact that flocks of girls go to college every year. They do not study all the time, it would be bad for the health of the charming creatures, and, in their leisure hours, we may reasonably infer that there is something doing. If there isn't, then there ought to be, which happened to be the opinion of Miss Marion Sedgwick, a sophomore in that dignified institution, Weatherby College for Women. This she expressed to her most intimate friend, Adele Tufts, as they sat at a cluttered tea table in a dormitory room. The latter, who was a beauty, and, therefore, adored by her classmates, exclaimed in feeling accents:

"You may be a careless scholar, my child, but you certainly can make candy. And I never tasted better cocoa. But, oh, dear, we have the dishes to wash. And of all the sticky, messy jobs!"

"Why should we clean up after a fudge party?" demanded the energetic Marion, who was the captain of the basket-ball team, and played a smashing game at tennis. "Six freshmen live on this same floor. I will go catch one and tie an apron on her. The saucy things! They *never* were so fresh as they are this year. I believe in hazing them, as they do at boys' colleges. You

ought to hear my brother Bob tell stories of what they did to him at Yale last year. It was something fierce."

The more timorous Adele nibbled another piece of fudge, and opened wide her eyes as she replied:

"Did they actually haze a football hero like the great Bob Sedgwick? They say he is the prominent man in his class. It really gives me the shivers to think of meeting him. Has he actually promised to come to our sophomore dance next month?"

"He gave me his word, dear, and I expect him to fall in love with you. I shall do all I can to help the affair along. But please don't ask him about his hazing experiences. He hadn't made the football team then, of course, and he was just a big, noisy freshman from out West, who couldn't see why he should show any respect for a sophomore. So they made an example of him. Listen, Adele, they compelled him to roll a peanut across the floor with his nose, and paddled him with a barrel stave while he was doing it. And they shampooed his lovely, brown hair with molasses, and filled it full of feathers from a pillow."

This brutal program horrified Adele, and she pensively commented: "We wouldn't dare to do such things to our freshmen, but they do deserve to be put in their places. You are a born leader, Marion, and if you have any scheme to suggest——"

There was a sharp knock at the hall door. It swung open before either girl could rise, and they stared, with cold disfavor, at a bright-eyed, rosy maiden, with a manner extremely self-possessed. They knew her merely by name as Daisy Wilde. Unafraid of her haughty elders, she greeted them with a friendly smile, as Marion said, in an aside:

"The impertinent little snippet! Who asked her to walk in?"

"It looks like a freshman, and it acts like one," disdainfully murmured Adele.

Miss Daisy Wilde smiled again and stood regarding them with a critical scrutiny, while she frankly observed:

"Awfully cordial, aren't you? The trouble with Weatherby College is that there are entirely too many sophomores in it. Of course, a lot of them will be weeded out and sent home after the mid-year examinations."

The languid Adele flared up at this and retorted:

"Do you know that children have their ears boxed for speeches like that?"

Daisy advanced to the center of the room, still unabashed, and her eyes snapped, but she held her temper and pleasantly replied:

"How very interesting! I should like to stay and hear more of your chatter, but I just ran in to borrow a dictionary, and some hairpins, and two postage stamps, and talcum powder, and one shoe lace, and ten cents for car fare downtown, and—— Oh, have you been making fudge? I dote on it."

Marion raised her hands in token of mock surrender. As an utterly impossible freshman, this child was the limit, and she cried:

"Tell her to help herself to the furniture, Adele. I wonder if she wants to borrow the wall paper."

This restored the intrepid Daisy to

good humor, and she airily assured them:

"That is a rather bright remark, for a sophomore. We are neighbors, you see, and I thought it was my duty to show a kindly spirit."

"You take my breath away," protested Adele. "Don't you, or can't you, realize that of all insects on earth, a freshman is the most insignificant? It is our duty to help educate you."

The impetuous Marion Sedgwick was not to be content with words. The situation demanded action. Whisking up from the table, she confronted the offending Daisy and announced:

"As my brother Bob says, we shall have to put you wise to yourself. You will proceed to wash these dishes, Miss Wilde, and you are not to speak unless you are spoken to."

"What if I don't?" calmly returned the freshman, a mirthful dimple in her damask cheek. "What if I rush to a window and scream for help? *You'll* be sorry. My parents say I have a perfectly dreadful disposition. That's why I was sent to college, because I was unmanageable at home."

"Pooh!" scoffed Marion. "You will be meek enough in a few minutes. Heat the curling irons, Adele. If she resists, put her to the torture."

Adele appeared startled, but dared not disobey this mandate. As she hastened into a bedroom, Daisy exclaimed, with eager enthusiasm:

"What fun! So you really intend to haze me. I didn't know you did such exciting stunts at Weatherby. The stupid old place has had no pep at all so far. Now I shall have something to put down in my diary. When does the hazing begin?"

Her justly indignant captors swooped at her and grasped both arms. Their accents were hoarse and blood-curdling. It was no use to struggle. She was in their power. The tragic Marion hissed in her ear:

"If you will do the dishes carefully, and apologize for being so criminally fresh, we may decide to spare you. Refuse, and this will be the most lamentable hour of your young life."

Having screwed up her courage to the proper pitch, Adele groaned dismally:

"How will it feel to be branded with red-hot curling irons?"

Miss Daisy Wilde giggled at this and rejoined, without apparent malice: "I never use them myself. Mine curls naturally. Of course, you plain girls, like Marion Sedgwick, have to do a lot of fussing to make yourselves look attractive. I can't blame you. Goodness, you almost had me scared. You ought to go on the stage. Wash those few dishes? Why, certainly. Didn't I tell you I was dying to be friendly?"

"Do you ever stop talking?" asked Marion, her hands at her ears.

"Only when there is a man around. Then I don't have to say much. They seem perfectly contented just to sit and look at me. I suppose it's quite different with you, poor thing."

Carelessly, Miss Daisy approached the table and poured hot water into a copper basin from the kettle over the alcohol lamp. The other girls were at her heels, and they were not whispering compliments. Demure and obedient was the freshman's demeanor as she picked up a plate. It slipped through her fingers, quite as if by accident, and smashed in fragments on the floor. Her expression was contrite, and her apologies profuse, as she took up a second plate. This also met with hard luck, and was shattered past mending. Marion seized her by the shoulders and proceeded to shake her. During this excitement, Daisy hit a cup with her elbow, and sent it spinning from the table as a total loss. Adele ran to rescue the remaining crockery, and place it on the piano, the freshman placidly explaining:

9B

"How careless of me! It was that lecture in the modern-history course this morning, on the breaking up of China. I am so easily influenced by what I hear. Can I do any more light housekeeping for you girls?"

The beautiful Adele was in a tantrum by now, and her voice was shrill as she cried:

"Did you ever see anything like her in your life? Bolt the door, Marion. We'll give her all the hazing she wants."

As Marion hastened to obey, she replied:

"I am trying to think of all the dreadful things that were ever done to a freshman. I wish my brother Bob were here to coach us."

"Please think hard, won't you?" begged Daisy. "I hope to be an author some day, and I'm so anxious to have all sorts of thrilling experiences as material for my pen."

"The first stunt on the program," suggested Adele, "is to make her dance and sing a song. In the boys' colleges, they make them sing, standing on their heads, but that doesn't seem proper for girls."

Undismayed and anxious to please, Miss Daisy Wilde promptly bent over, hands touching the floor, and began to balance herself with the ease of an acrobat, telling them:

"I'll be glad to try. I used to be a perfect wonder at standing on my head when I was a little girl."

"Stop it, you shocking young creature!" commanded Marion, rushing over to thwart the performance. Daisy alighted on her feet, bowed, and said:

"Now I'll sing. My top notes have been admired as quite classy."

They listened with critical disapproval, and Adele interrupted to inform her:

"You won't get off as easy as all this. What next, Marion? Something awful

and creepy, that will make her fear us."

"Gracious!" exclaimed the victim. "Please give me time to write a farewell note to mother. In spite of her faults, they are fond of Daisy at home."

"Fetch two trunk straps from the closet," came from Marion, and, while Adele went to find them, the impenitent freshman gazed with lively interest at the top of the piano and inquired:

"Oh, whose photograph is that? What a stunning chap! It must be your brother, the great Bob Sedgwick, of Yale. There is a family resemblance, but he is ever so much better looking than you, isn't he? Does he come here to see you?"

At this provocation, Marion attempted to give the young person another shaking, but she twisted away and slapped the tormentor's face. In this spirited manner began a rough-house which would have done credit to the rooms of Bob Sedgwick himself. The participants lost their hairpins as well as their tempers. Marion clung to one of Daisy's arms, and Adele to the other. The resistance was plucky, but the odds were too great. They dragged her into a high-backed chair and bound her fast with the two trunk straps, buckling them behind the chair. Her hands were made fast with a four-in-hand tie, which was wound about her wrists. She scorned to scream for help, and sputtered at them:

"Two husky sophomores abusing a poor little, harmless freshman, who tried to be friendly! I never knew girls could be such cats."

"Wait till you feel our claws," panted Marion.

"You'll be nicer to live with after this," said Adele. "Fasten her good and tight, so she can't wiggle out of the chair."

"Did you see her slap my face? I must have revenge. Now for the slow torture."

"Let me get a sheet, Marion, to cover her up with. It's easier than blind-folding her, and spookier. Don't let her see what is about to happen to her."

The cruel Marion lighted the alcohol lamp and flourished the curling irons while waiting for the sheet. Daisy murmured plaintively:

"Here's where it's up to me to show my sand; but, for pity's sake, don't tickle me. Anything but that."

"If you make the slightest noise," sternly admonished Marion, "we will tickle the soles of your feet with a whisk broom."

"And put ice down her back, and make her eat a whole tube of tooth paste," added Adele, returning with the sheet. They covered her up completely, and secured the shroud with safety pins. In muffled tones, they heard Daisy say:

"Do tell me, girls, is my sheet on straight?"

They pulled down the window shades, and the room was appropriately dim. Marion uttered her very dismalest groans, and Adele, who had a knack of impromptu verse, chanted in a minor key, like a dirge:

"When we find a freshman that's as fresh as Daisy Wilde,
She must be sternly disciplined, just like a naughty child.
And so we'll mend her manners and teach her to behave,
For a freshman is a nuisance and a freshman is a slave."

This made such a hit with Daisy, that she implored, from beneath the sheet:

"Do you mind writing that down for me? I want to put it in my diary."

"You must solemnly promise to obey our commands," exhorted Adele. "Are the curling irons red-hot, Marion, my dear?"

"Yes. They will sizzle when they touch human flesh. Make her promise to do as she is told."

"So be it. Daisy Wilde, unless you wish to be branded for life, you will give us your word of honor that you will propose to the first man you meet."

This staggered the dauntless freshman, and she was silent before protesting:

"Tell the very first man I meet that I love him? Oh, dear, supposing it happens to be old John, the janitor, with the rheumatics and the dyed whiskers. The men usually propose to me. Some girls have to run after them. You know how *that* is, don't you."

Disregarding the insult, Marion repeated:

"The first man you meet. Honest and true, black and blue. Say it. Remember, you are in our power, and we are absolutely without mercy."

"Very well," sighed the captive, kicking at the sheet. "I promise. Some strange man is due to get the shock of his life."

A deep-toned tower clock somewhere on the campus slowly struck the hour of four. The pair of sophomores listened and appeared startled. Hazing was forgotten, and Marion exclaimed:

"Heavens, we have a date with Professor Higginbotham, to talk over that advanced course in English literature. He will be simply furious if we fail to report on time."

"Come on, then," replied Adele. "It will take only a few minutes. Leave the freshman here just as she is. She can't possibly get away. We can resume operations when we come back."

They scurried for the door, nor remembered to lock it, as they flew down the long corridor. Daisy heard the departing swish of their skirts, and wickedly observed to herself:

"If I could only get loose, I'd pour ink all over their best gowns, and cut their ribbons into bits, and devour the very last bit of fudge."

With the spirit of a true sport, she

soon ceased to struggle against her bonds, and resigned herself to the inevitable. Perhaps ten minutes passed, and there came a heavy knock on the door. Daisy remained silent, hoping to escape the humiliation of discovery by other hard-hearted sophomores. Another knock, a brief delay, and the door was opened. The figure which halted on the threshold was no student of Weatherby College for Women. It was that of a stalwart young man, who stood blinking into the darkened room, as though trying to get his bearings. It was proper enough for a fellow to sit down in his sister's rooms and wait for her, reflected Bob Sedgwick. She wasn't expecting him, and, no doubt, she was attending a recitation or something of the sort. But why the deuce were the shades pulled down and the place all gloomed up.

He advanced cautiously, stumbled against a desk, barked his shins on a stool and laid his overcoat across it, while he waited until his eyes were better accustomed to this singularly dim interior. Presently he was able to discern the outline of the sheeted specter in the high-backed chair, and, stepping backward, he piously ejaculated:

"My sainted grandmother! What's this? A ghost in a trance? Is it alive?"

It was unseemly for a football hero to show cowardice, and he moved a little closer, but warily, as though afraid it might jump at him. His voice startled the silent Daisy, who had been puzzled by his heavy tread, and, in her turn, she cried:

"Glory! That sounds like a man. They have a sense of chivalry. Help, help, if you please, kind sir."

Young Mr. Sedgwick jumped as if he had been shot, and he was no longer cautious, as he strode close to the specter and exclaimed:

"By Jove, you sound like a girl! And you are not my sister Marion. What's

the answer? Here, let me shove up those confounded window shades."

The invisible Daisy was petulant as she told him, tugging at the sheet:

"How can I explain myself when I'm all tied up like a roll of cotton batting? I should say I am *not* your sister Marion. I detest her."

From the windows, Sedgwick hurried to the high-backed chair, and there was a ripping noise, as he yanked away the sheet, regardless of the safety pins. Daisy was revealed, and he found her far from displeasing to look at. In fact, he stood and stared until she demanded to know if he intended to leave her all buckled tight with trunk straps. This spurred him to action, and he set about releasing her, declaiming very earnestly:

"Of all the outrageous performances! What does it mean, anyhow? If it wasn't rude to swear in a lady's presence— Here, let me untie your hands."

With admirable presence of mind, the hands of Miss Daisy, once released, flew to her hair, which she deftly endeavored to restore to something like order. She smiled her thanks at her noble preserver, and still further ensnared him by saying:

"Your photograph does not do you justice, Mr. Sedgwick. Thank you so much. They have been playing the game of hazing Daisy. You see, I am entirely too fresh. They are coming back presently, your sister and another one, to torture me with red-hot curling irons and brand me for life. I was in despair until I heard your voice."

Bob was astonished that such things could be in a girls' college. The faculty ought to stamp it out.

"Hazing Daisy? They must be crazy," he replied. "Pardon me, I don't happen to know the rest of your name."

"Wilde. They are taming me. I am glad you don't agree with them."

He helped her to rise, and tenderly escorted her to another chair, solicitously inquiring:

"Do you feel faint? Is there anything I can do for you? I'll surely read the riot act to Marion. They are jealous of you. Why, that's a cinch. Excuse the frankness, but you are positively the prettiest girl I have met since I——"

He hesitated, and Daisy assured him:

"I don't feel faint, Mr. Sedgwick, but you have a way with you that makes one rather dizzy. Being hazed isn't so dreadful, after all. Won't your sister be surprised to find you here?"

"You guess right, Miss Wilde. You see, the Yale football team plays at Amherst to-morrow, and the men go on to Boston to-night. We had no practice at New Haven this afternoon, because this warm weather had pulled the weights down, and the coaches gave us a lay-off. I got permission to run over to Weatherby and see Marion, and catch the crowd when the train goes through to-night. It looks like a surprise, all right."

"A delightful one for me," said Daisy. "Do *you* think I am entirely too fresh?"

"As fresh and sweet as the daisies they named you after. I wish there was some way to give Marion a dose of her own medicine."

For a freshman, Daisy showed a quick intelligence. This hint was enough. She rapidly outlined her plan, to which Bob grinned and nodded assent. He was to take her place in the high-backed chair, and she would cover him up with the sheet.

"I get you," he broke in. "Great stuff. And when they pull some more hazing stunts on me, it will hand them a jolt! Where can you hide and look on? I don't want to lose you."

"In one of the bedrooms, and I'll leave the door ajar, so I can peek. Get ready for the sheet, quick. Those girls

may pop in any minute. You must double yourself up more, so as not to look so tall. There, that's the way to tuck yourself into the chair. I can cover you up very nicely. Now let me darken the room again, and they'll never notice the difference. I hope I can keep from laughing. You must make no more pretty speeches to me. They are upsetting."

The Yale guard vanished beneath the sheet, objecting in a hoarse whisper:

"Confound it, I can't see you. I'm not sure I like this game."

"And your sister thinks I am a chatterbox, Mr. Sedgwick. I am tongue-tied, beside you. You simply must be quiet. They didn't make a very thorough job of hazing you at Yale."

A moment later, the alert Daisy heard sounds in the hall, and dodged behind the door of the nearer bedroom, leaving Mr. Sedgwick to ponder over the fact that he had been lured into making a blithering idiot of himself. As the unsuspecting Adele entered the sitting room, she was saying:

"Professor Higginbotham might have sent us word that he had been called out of town. He interfered with our afternoon amusement. It was horrid of him."

"Never mind," replied Marion. "Our freshman is still here, and as still as a mouse. I don't believe she has moved. Frightened stiff. Now let's get busy some more."

"What do you suggest? You are so much more ingenious than I."

"Well, why not give her a cute little mustache, with a piece of burned cork? And then take off her shoes and stockings, and fill them with cracker crumbs, and make her put them on again."

"Excellent, my dear. And march her up and down the hall. We can find some more sophomores, and she will have to run the gantlet. Do you need more light?"

"No, keep it spooky a little longer.

My, but she certainly is subdued. The treatment is taking effect. I will take off her shoes and stockings, while you crumble the crackers."

Valiantly Adele approached the sheeted shape and leaned down to catch hold of one of the freshman's feet. A gasp of dismay, and she let fall one of Bob Sedgwick's substantial No. 10 shoes. It smote the floor with a thump at the same instant that the amazed Miss Adele Tufts emitted a hysterical shriek. Marion dropped the dish of crackers, and excitedly implored:

"Did the little wretch kick you in the nose? Why don't you speak to me?"

Adele was frozen in her tracks. Her hands made helpless gestures, and once she pressed them to her head. Her voice was a broken wail as she stammered:

"It—it w-wasn't her f-foot at all. S-she has changed her feet. I took right hold of a f-foot big enough for a giant. Oh, I wish I had strength enough to run away!"

The less emotional Marion had a mind to investigate, but at this critical instant Mr. Sedgwick, whose weight was near two hundred, brought both feet down with a jar that shook the windows. The two girls clung to each other for support. Both yearned for more light in the room, but neither dared to go to a window alone. Fear-some curiosity held them spellbound, which was why they had not fled into the hall. Adele moaned:

"I'll never, never haze another freshman as long as I live! That phantom with the immense feet is *not* Daisy Wilde! *It's a man!* Oh, do pull up the shades! No, no! Don't leave me alone in the dark! I refuse to move—and I'm afraid to look!"

Marion displayed superhuman valor, and actually advanced to the nearest window. As the room brightened, and they gazed wanly at the awful shape in

the high-backed chair, Daisy Wilde herself appeared from a bedroom, with a saucy smile and a mocking bow. She moved directly toward the chair, pausing only to say:

"As kitten-hearted sophomores, you two are certainly the limit. No freshman would make such a foolish exhibition of herself. Your brother, the great Bob Sedgwick, would be proud of you if he could see you now, Marion!"

There was no obvious retort to this, and Marion could only look at the stricken Adele in speechless bewilderment. The dramatic moment had arrived, and Miss Daisy Wilde made the most of it. Whisking off the sheet, she disclosed the mighty football man from Yale. He seemed to enjoy the climax, to gloat over the sad state of his sister and her friend. They were unable to rally until Marion feebly exclaimed:

"But you are in New Haven, at college, Bob—and you wouldn't play such a disgraceful trick on me!"

Grand and severe was the demeanor of her brother, and he chidingly replied:

"The less said about disgraceful tricks, the better, sis. If you are so darned anxious to fill my stockings full of cracker crumbs, why don't you begin?"

Daisy still held the center of the stage, and blandly she interrupted:

"Miss Adele Tufts, may I present a friend of mine, Mr. Sedgwick? It's common gossip that you have been dying to meet him."

This was the last straw, and Adele exclaimed, in great confusion:

"I do hope you will let me explain, Mr. Sedgwick! There are times when it is no sin to *murder* a freshman!"

"Nothing like that while I am around," replied Bob. "Miss Wilde and I have been getting on famously."

Daisy had reserved her trump card, and now she played it with an air of triumph. Her persecutors were so flus-

tered that they failed to remember the agreement extorted from her, but it was in her mind as she suggested:

"I shall be delighted to show you the campus, Mr. Sedgwick, if you care to take a walk. I have an hour to spare."

Marion came out of her trance and flashed her comrade a warning signal. It was for them to forestall the next move. Suddenly affectionate was Marion's manner as she purred:

"One moment, Daisy, dear. The joke is on us, and we release you from that promise. You know what I mean. If you haven't done it already, please forget it. The hazing is finished, every bit of it."

Adele betrayed even more anxiety as she added: "Don't give that promise another thought, will you, Daisy?"

The freshman sweetly answered, to make them as unhappy as possible: "I shall have a lovely chance to tell him while we are strolling across the campus. I haven't forgotten the promise. Don't worry."

Mr. Sedgwick chimed in briskly: "I should worry. I may see you later, Marion, before my train goes. Good-by, Miss Tufts. Too bad you dislike freshmen. They are my hobby."

He followed Daisy into the hall, leaving the two sophomores to hold a consolation meeting. It was Adele, the fair, who gazed at the piano, and wiped her eyes as she faltered:

"I wish I had never seen his photograph! This episode will haunt me to my dying day. He—he didn't even look at me, Marion, except in scorn."

"We did seem to queer ourselves," was the sad reply. "Isn't it awful? If Daisy Wilde does propose to that silly brother of mine, he may take it seriously. She has completely turned his head."

They were silent until Daisy herself came dancing in from the hall and paid no heed to their stony glances. Blithe was her greeting:

"Hello, you poor simps! Holding a funeral service? I made an excuse to run back and laugh at you. The great Bob Sedgwick is waiting for me downstairs. Bless him, he would wait a week. That boy will stand without hitching. He is a darling, and I intend to propose to him in dead earnest. Thank you for arranging it. I never break my word, and you made me take a solemn oath."

Adele slipped a caressing arm around the waist of the perfidious child and informed her:

"We are really very fond of you, Daisy. Now, if you will forget it, we'll help you with your lessons all winter, and invite you to every blessed one of our fudge parties."

"And whenever you want to borrow anything from us, just help yourself," eagerly spoke Marion. "Everything we have is yours. You mustn't let my big brother spoil you with his idle compliments. He jollies every girl he meets."

"Yes, I noticed it," scoffed Daisy. "He fairly fell over himself to be nice to you, Adele. I don't see why you are so upset about brother Bob. You gave him to me, didn't you? And I shall take the best of care of him."

The sisterly instinct impelled Marion to try to save her susceptible brother from himself. There was no telling how this affair might end, possibly in a quick-fire elopement. He was unmistakably infatuated, and Daisy was capable of anything. Heroic measures were necessary. It was a duty to intervene. She cried out to Adele:

"I shan't allow this brazen infant to carry Bob off and propose to him, even in fun. Help me drag her into the bedroom and lock the door!"

They straightway pounced upon the light-hearted Daisy and pushed and hauled her in the direction indicated. This time she raised her voice to let Bob Sedgwick know that they were kidnapping her. He came not, however, and

the prisoner found solace in telling them:

"Anyhow, he says I am the prettiest girl he has seen since he was old enough to sit up and take notice. Oh, but I wish I had a hatpin!"

They turned the key on her, and hastily smoothed their ruffled plumage. If Bob returned in search of her, he was to be informed that one of the teachers had met Daisy in the hall and sent her to her own room, where she was presumed to be studying at this hour of the afternoon. They were truthful girls, but the end justified the means. No sooner was this alibi framed than Bob came trotting back to say, in an uneasy manner:

"Where is Miss Wilde? Have you seen her? I was waiting for her, when suddenly I had a hunch that she needed me. I even fancied I heard her calling me. I'm queer that way, when I am awfully interested in anybody. Mental telepathy, you know."

Marion cast a frightened glance at the bedroom door and tried to look unconcerned as she replied:

"I imagine she isn't allowed to go outdoors again to-day. The faculty is very strict with freshmen, and Daisy is on probation, I believe."

Bob eyed her keenly, and was not wholly convinced. He frowned as he exclaimed:

"You girls look all fussed up and guilty. I won't stand any more nonsense."

They began to talk at once, to drown any noise from the bedroom. "She ran in here for a minute, and then disappeared. Girls of that age are flighty. You never know what they'll do next."

"Perhaps she was making a fool of you, Bob. Do you really want us to help you find her? Why, certainly. There is no reasoning with a boy who is old enough to know better."

"She may have gone down one flight of stairs while you came up the other."

Marion was artfully coaxing him toward the exit, while he continued to scold and grumble. Once he was decoyed into the hall, Adele lingered to cross the room and unlock the bedroom door, her shoulder braced against it, and ready to slam it shut in case the inmate made a dash for liberty. It had seemed singular that Daisy should remain so quiet while her hero was within earshot. Adele peered inside, and opened the door a trifle farther. There was no Daisy in the room, nor was she in a closet nor under the bed. But there was no possible way for her to get out. The distracted Adele even opened the bureau drawers. Only a freshman with wings could escape from this prison, and Miss Wilde was too naughty to have sprouted them. There was nothing to do but carry the tidings to Marion, and Adele therefore sped in pursuit of her chum.

No more than three minutes after this, Daisy strolled in from the hall corridor, coming from the direction opposite to that taken by Adele. There was a three-cornered rent in her skirt, and one hand was barked across the knuckles, but she seemed in the best of spirits as she moved on tiptoe, spied Bob's overcoat, felt of the texture, became interested in the plate of fudge, and ate a piece as she said to herself:

"He forgot his overcoat. That shows he was thinking only of me, for Yale boys are so fussy about their clothes, as a rule. He will come back for it. They usually come back, I have found. There is no sense in my looking for him. Those girls are so amusing! Locked me in a bedroom! Pooh! I might as well collect the things I came in to borrow—a dictionary and hairpins and postage stamps and talcum powder——"

The joyful Bob confronted her, entering at full tilt as he shouted:

"Hooray! Here you are! They told

me a fib. This is great luck. I forgot my overcoat. Marion pretended she was trying to find you, but I suspected she was putting up some kind of a game. Why, what's this? How did you hurt your hand?"

"It was a game of hide and seek, and they thought I was *it*," replied the resourceful Daisy. "They were so anxious to keep us apart that they shut me up in your sister's bedroom. I got out at peril of my life. I was quite discouraged at first, but I crept out on the window ledge and shut my eyes and said my prayers and swung across to the next window, clinging to a waterspout and some ivy, and tumbled head over heels into another girl's room."

"You are a wonder, take it from me, Miss Wilde! Did you really risk breaking your neck because you wanted to see me again?"

"Yes, Mr. Sedgwick," and Daisy was never more serious. "I had something very important to tell you. We have not known each other very long, but there is a question which I must ask you. I cannot help myself. You will think it strange——"

"Please ask me anything you like, Miss Wilde," was the gallant response.

"It is not easy to say, Mr. Sedgwick. I am not very often rattled, but—but, oh, you will be dreadfully shocked. It is so sudden. I have made up my mind to propose to you. I have loved you madly from first we met, almost an hour ago. Will you marry me, or must I be nothing more than a sister to you?"

For once, the indomitable football guard was fairly played off his feet. He turned very red, swallowed hard, and rammed his hands in his pockets. This was exploiting the doctrine of woman's rights with a vengeance. And some of the fellows at New Haven thought girl's colleges were slow and stupid! He pulled himself together, and managed to say:

"Good Lord, Miss Daisy, do they grow any more at home like you? It's the first time I was ever proposed to, and it rather gets my goat. Of course, I can't believe you really mean it, but it is a mighty pleasant line of conversation. I was about to tell you that I had the symptoms, but you surely did beat me to it."

It was a drooping Daisy that hung her head and sighed in a wistful way:

"And you refuse to take me seriously? Was I to pine and wither while I waited for you to speak? Do you think I am too fresh?"

A hero of a nature less manly might have taken advantage of the situation, and tried to steal a kiss. Daisy was afraid he might, and likewise afraid that he wouldn't. He did take her hand and was most reluctant to release it as he said, with a merry twinkle:

"It's a bargain, until you write and ask me to cancel it." He refrained from sentiments more fervent, suspecting a hoax, but just then he caught a glimpse of Marion and Adele from the corner of his eye. They had lingered at the door, and thought themselves unseen. With tremendous gusto, Bob exclaimed to the blushing Daisy:

"Accept you, my darling? Sudden? Of course it is, but the sooner the quicker. No man in his right mind could refuse you."

Marion realized that she was too late to save her brother from the rashest act of his life, but nevertheless she rushed between the misguided pair and cried:

"Don't be such a goose, Bob! This was one of our stunts for hazing Daisy. She had to promise to propose to the first man she met."

Adele made a mournful duet of it by observing:

"We released her from the promise, but the horrid child has gone and done it, just to spite us!"

Cold were the accents of Mr. Robert Sedgwick as he stood close to the side

of her to whom he had plighted his troth with record-breaking dispatch.

"Really, Miss Tufts, this seems to be a matter for Miss Wilde and me to decide for ourselves."

Drawing herself to her full height, which raised her altitude to that of Bob's shoulder, Miss Daisy Wilde delivered herself of this farewell speech:

"You girls have given me a lovely party, so thrilling to write about in my diary, and I am sure Mr. Sedgwick, my fiancé, has enjoyed it, for he told me so. Dear me, what a sheepish-looking pair of sophomores you are, specially the *beeyutiful* Adele Tufts, the belle of her class. What is that clever song of yours? Ah, I-remember!"

"And so we'll mend her manners and teach her to behave,
For a freshman is a nuisance and a freshman is a slave."

A few hours later, young Mr. Sedgwick swung himself aboard a train and was uproariously greeted by his comrades of the Yale eleven. In his button-hole was a rose which he guarded with particular care. Sitting apart from the others, and glumly taciturn, as usual, was Fred Varney, the captain, who regarded football as less of a pastime than a battle. Bob halted to chat with him about the next day's game, and Varney growled:

"You look to me like a man who had been to call on some other fellow's sister."

"Maybe so, Fred. At any rate, it has been some afternoon."

"I don't get you," replied the cynic. "I never saw the inside of a girl's college, but I should think it would bore a man to death."

Sedgwick laid a hand on the captain's knee and very earnestly confided:

"The wrong dope, my boy; entirely wrong. You can take it from me, an afternoon at Weatherby is a liberal education. It makes Yale seem as shy of pep as an old folks' home."

The Way of the North

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "Raw Gold," "Piano Jim," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS

The wilds of British Columbia had no lure for Estella Benton as she journeyed north to live with her brother Charlie, after the financial failure and death of their father. Charlie Benton had a lumber camp in the woods, and bossed a gang of rough-and-ready jacks. When Estella arrived there she experienced a feeling of disgust at the crudity of it all. Furthermore, when the camp cook went on a drunk, and her brother impressed her into service, she was thoroughly disillusioned, and the drudgery stirred up her anger. A rich young chap, Paul Abbey, whose people have a summer camp in the woods, proposes marriage to Estella. Despite her plight, she refuses him. Thereupon Charlie tells her what a fool she is. To add to her disgust, she learns that Charlie drinks, and that he has an affair on with an Indian girl employed about the camp. At such a moment Jack Fyfe presents himself. He is one of the big lumber bosses of the region, and dominant in everything he undertakes. Fyfe wastes no time in asking Estella to become his wife, even though she professes no love for him. He declares himself willing to take all risks in consequence. Against her judgment, the girl consents to marriage, mainly to escape from her brother's hands, and the oddly mated pair go on a honeymoon.

(A Four-Part Story—Part Two)

CHAPTER XV.

—AND LIVED HAPPILY.

SPRING had waved her transforming wand over the lake region before the Fyfes came home again. All the low ground, the creeks and hollows and banks were bright green with new-leaved birch and alder and maple. The air was full of those aromatic exudations the forest throws off when it is in the full tide of the growing time. Shores that Stella had last seen dismal and forlorn in the frost fog, sheathed in ice, banked with deep snow, lay sparkling now in warm sunshine, under an unflecked arch of blue. All that was left of winter was the white cap on Mount Douglas, snow-filled chasms on distant, rocky peaks. Stella stood on the Hot Springs wharf, looking out across the emerald

deep of the lake, thinking soberly of the contrast.

Something, she reflected, some part of that desolate winter, must have seeped to the very roots of her being to produce the state of mind in which she embarked upon that matrimonial voyage. A little of it clung to her, still. She could look back at those months of loneliness, of immeasurable toil, and numberless indignities, without any qualms. There would be no repetition of that. The world at large would say she had done well. She herself, in her most cynical moments, could not deny that she had done well. Materially, life promised to be generous. She was married to a man who quietly but inexorably got what he wanted, and it was her good fortune that he wanted her to have the best of everything.

She saw him now coming from the hotel, and she regarded him thoughtfully, a powerful figure swinging along with light, effortless steps. He was back on his own ground, openly glad to be back. Yet she could not recall that he had ever shown himself at a disadvantage anywhere they had been together. He wore evening clothes, and mixed with those who did as unconcernedly as he wore Mackinaws and calked boots among his loggers. Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief—all men were alike to Jack Fyfe. She had to admit that socially, at least, Jack Fyfe could play his hand at any turn of the game. Where or how he came by this faculty, she did not know. In fact, so far as Jack Fyfe's breeding and antecedents were concerned, she knew little more than before their marriage. He was not given to reminiscence. His people—distant relatives—lived in her own native State of Pennsylvania. He had an only sister, who was now in South America with her husband, a civil engineer. Beyond that Fyfe did not go, and Stella made no attempt to pry up the lid of his past. She was not particularly curious.

Her clearest judgment of him was at firsthand. He was a big, virile type of man, generous, considerate, so sure of himself that he could be tolerant of others. She could easily understand why Roaring Lake considered Jack Fyfe "square." The other tales of him that circulated there, she doubted now. The fighting type he certainly was, aggressive in a clash, but if there was any downright coarseness in him, it had never manifested itself to her.

She was not sorry she had married him. If they had not set out blind in a fog of sentiment, as he had once put it, nevertheless they got on. She did not love him—not as she defined that magic word. But she liked him, was mildly proud of him. When he kissed her, if there was no mad thrill

in it, there was at least a passive contentment in having inspired that affection. For he left her in no doubt as to where he stood. Not by what he said. Wholly by his actions.

He joined her now. The *Panther*, glossy black as a crow's wing with fresh paint, lay at the pier end, with their trunks aboard. Stella surveyed those marked with her initials, looking them over with a critical eye, when they reached the deck.

"How in the world did I ever manage to accumulate so much stuff, Jack?" she asked quizzically. "I didn't realize it. We might have been doing Europe, with souvenir collecting our principal aim, by the amount of our baggage."

Fyfe smiled, without commenting. They sat on a trunk and watched Roaring Springs fall astern, dwindle to a line of white dots against the great green base of the mountain that rose behind it.

"It's good to get back here," he said at last. "To me, anyway. How about it, Stella? You haven't got so much of a grouch at the world in general as you had when we left, eh?"

"No, thank goodness," she responded fervently.

"You don't look as if you had," he observed, his eyes admiringly upon her.

Nor did she. There was a bloom on the soft contour of her cheek, a luminous gleam in her wide, gray eyes. All the ill wrought by months of drudging work and mental revolt had vanished. She was undeniably good to look at, a woman in full flower, aglow with the unquenched fires of youth. She was aware that Jack Fyfe found her so, and tolerably glad that he did so find her. She had revised a good many of her first groping estimates of him that winter. And when, over the port bow, she saw, in behind Halfway Point, the huddled shacks of her brother's camp, where so much had overtaken her, she experienced a swift

rush of thankfulness that she was—as she was. She slid her gloved hand impulsively into Jack Fyfe's, and his strong fingers shut down on hers closely.

They sat silent until the camp lay abeam. About it there was every sign of activity. A chunky stern-wheeler, with blow-off valve hissing, stood by a boom of logs in the bay, and men were moving back and forth across the swifters, making all ready for a tow. Stella marked a new bunk house. Away back on the logging ground, in a greater clearing, she saw the separate smoke of two donkey engines. Another, a big roader, Fyfe explained, puffed at the water's edge. She could see a string of logs tearing down the skid road.

"He's going pretty strong, that brother of yours," Fyfe remarked. "If he holds his gait, he'll be a big timberman before you know it."

"He'll make money, I imagine," Stella admitted. "But I don't know what good that will do him. He'll only want more. What is there about money-making that warps some men so, makes them so grossly self-centered? I'd pity any girl who married Charlie. He used to be rather wild at home. But I never dreamed any man could change so."

"You use the conventional measuring stick on him," her husband answered, with that tolerance which so often surprised her. "Maybe his ways are pretty crude. But he's feverishly hewing a competence—which is what we're all after—out of pretty crude material. And he's just a kid, after all, with a kid's tendency to go to extremes now and then. I kinda like the beggar's ambition and energy."

"But he hasn't the least consideration for anybody or anything," Stella protested. "He rides roughshod over everybody. That isn't either right or decent."

"It's the only way some men can get to the top," Fyfe answered quietly. "They concentrate on the object to be attained. That's all that counts until they're in a secure position. Then, when they stop to draw their breath, sometimes they find they've done lots of things they wouldn't do again. You watch. By and by Charlie Benton will cease to have those violent reactions that offend you so. As it is—he's a youngster, bucking a big game. Life, when you have your own way to hew through it, with little besides your hands and brain for capital, is no silk-lined affair."

Presently they were drawing in to Cougar Point, with the weather-bleached buildings of Fyfe's camp showing now among the upspringing second-growth scrub. Fyfe went forward and spoke to the man at the wheel. The *Panther* swung offshore.

"Why are we going out again?" Stella asked.

"Oh, just for fun," Fyfe smiled.

He sat down beside her and slipped one arm around her waist. In a few minutes they cleared the Point. Stella was looking away across the lake, at the deep cleft where Silver Creek split a mountain range in twain.

"Look around," said he, "and tell me what you think of the House of Fyfe."

There it stood, snow-white, broad-porched, a new house reared upon the old-stone foundation she remembered. The noon sun-struck flashing on the windows. About it spread the living green of the grassy square, and behind that the massive, darker-hued background of the forest.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "What wizard of construction did the work? That was why you fussed so long over those plans in Los Angeles. I thought it was to be this summer, or maybe next winter. I never dreamed you were having it built right away."

"Well, isn't it rather nice to come home to?" he observed.

"It's dear. A homy-looking place," she answered. "A beautiful site, and the house fits. That white, and the red tiles. Is the big stone fireplace in the living room, Jack?"

"Yes, and one in pretty nearly every other room, besides," he nodded. "Wood fires are cheerful."

The *Panther* turned her nose shoreward at Fyfe's word.

"I wondered about that foundation the first time I saw it," Stella confessed. "If you built it, and why it was never finished. There was moss over the stones, in places. And that lawn wasn't made in a single season. I know, because dad had a country place once, and he was raging around two or three summers because the land was so hard to get well grassed."

"No, I didn't build the foundation nor make the lawn," Fyfe told her. "I merely kept it in shape. A man named Hale owned the land that takes in the bay and the Point when I first came to the lake. He was going to be married. I knew him pretty well. But it was tough going those days. He was in the hole on some of his timber, and he and his girl kept waiting. Meantime he cleared and graded that little hill, sowed it to grass, and laid the foundation. He was about to start building, when he got killed. A falling tree caught him. I bought in his land and the timber limits that lie back of it. That's how the foundation came there."

"It's a wonder it didn't grow up wild," Stella mused. "How long ago was that?"

"About five years," Fyfe said. "I kept the grass trimmed. It didn't seem right to let the brush overrun it after the poor devil put that labor of love on it. It always seemed to me that it should be kept smooth and green, and that there should be a big, roomy

bungalow there. You see my hunch was correct, too."

She looked up at him in some wonder. She hadn't accustomed herself to associating Jack Fyfe with actions based on pure sentiment. He was too intensely masculine, solid, practical, impassive. He did not seem to realize even that sentiment had influenced him in this. He discussed it too matter-of-factly for that. She wondered what became of the bride-to-be. But that Fyfe could not tell her.

"Hale showed me her picture once," he said. "But I never saw her. Oh, I suppose she's married some other fellow long ago. Hale was a good sort. He was outlucked, that's all."

The *Panther* slid in to the float. Jack and Stella got ashore. Lefty Howe came down to meet them. Thirty-five or forty men were stringing away from the camp, back to their work in the woods. Some waved greeting to Jack Fyfe, and he waved back in the hail-fellow fashion of the camps.

"How's the frau, Lefty?" he inquired, after they had shaken hands.

"Fine. Down to Vancouver. Sister's sick," Howe answered. "House's all shipshape. Wanta eat here, or up there?"

"Here, at the camp, until we get straightened around," Fyfe responded. "Tell Pollock to have something for us in about half an hour. We'll go up and take a look."

Howe went in to convey this message, and the two set off up the path. A sudden spirit of impishness made Jack Fyfe sprint. Stella gathered up her skirt and raced after him. But a sudden shortness of breath overtook her, and she came panting to where Fyfe had stopped to wait.

"You'll have to climb hills and row and swim, so you'll get some wind," Fyfe chuckled. "Too much easy living, lady."

She smiled, without making any reply to this sally, and they entered the house—the House of Fyfe that was to be her home.

If the exterior had pleased her, she went from room to room inside with growing amazement. Fyfe had furnished it from basement to attic without a word to her that he had any such undertaking in hand. Yet there was scarcely a room in which she could not find the visible result of some expressed wish or desire. Often during the winter they had talked over that matter of furnishings, and she recalled how unconsciously she had been led to make suggestions, which he had stored up and acted upon. For the rest she found her husband's taste beyond criticism.

"You're an amazing sort of a man, Jack," she said thoughtfully. "Is there anything you're not up to? Even a Chinese servant in the kitchen; it's perfect."

"I'm glad you like it," he said. "I hoped you would."

"Who wouldn't?" she cried impulsively. "I love pretty things. Wait till I get done rearranging."

They introduced themselves to the immobile-featured Celestial when they had jointly and severally inspected the house from top to bottom. Sam Foo gazed at them, listened to their account of themselves, and disappeared. He reentered the room presently, bearing a package.

"Mist' Chol' Bentle, him leave foh yo'."

Stella looked at it. On the outer wrapping was written:

From C. A. Benton to Mrs. John Henderson Fyfe. A belated wedding gift.

She cut the string and delved into the cardboard box, and gasped. Out of a swathing of tissue paper her hands bared sundry small articles. A little cap and jacket of knitted silk—its

double in fine, fleecy yarn. A long silk coat. A bonnet to match. Both daintily embroidered. Other things—a shoal of them—baby things. A grin struggled for lodgment on Fyfe's freckled countenance. His blue eyes twinkled.

"I suppose," he growled, "that's Charlie's idea of a joke, huh?"

Stella turned away from the tiny garments, one little hood crumpled tight in her hand. She laid her hot face against his breast. Her shoulders quivered. She was crying.

"Stella, Stella, what's the matter?" he whispered.

"It's no joke," she sobbed. "It's a—it's a reality."

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH EVENTS MARK TIME.

From that day on Stella found in her hands the reins over a smooth, frictionless, well-ordered existence. Sam Foo proved himself such a domestic treasure as only the trained Oriental can be. When the labor of an eight-room dwelling proved a little too much for him, he urbanely said so. Thereupon, at Fyfe's suggestion, he imported a fellow countryman, another bland, silent-footed model of efficiency in personal service. Thereafter Stella's task of supervision proved a sinecure.

A week or so after their return, in sorting over some of her belongings, she came across the check Charlie had given her—that two hundred and seventy dollars which represented the only money she had ever earned in her life. She studied it a minute, then went out to where her husband sat perched on the veranda rail.

"You might cash this, Jack," she suggested.

He glanced at the slip.

"Better have it framed as a memento," he said, smiling. "You'll never earn two hundred odd dollars so hard

again, I hope. No, I'd keep it, if I were you. If ever you should need it, it'll always be good—unless Charlie goes broke."

There never had been any question of money between them. From the day of their marriage, Fyfe had made her a definite monthly allowance, a greater sum than she needed or spent.

"As a matter of fact," he went on, "I'm going to open an account in your name at the Royal Bank. So you can negotiate your own paper, and pay your own bills by check."

She went in and put away the check. It was hers, earned, all too literally, in the sweat of her brow. For all that it represented she had given service threefold. If ever there came a time when that hunger for independence which had been fanned to a flame in her brother's kitchen should demand appeasement— She pulled herself up short when she found her mind running upon such an eventuality. Her future was ordered. She was married—to be a mother. Here lay her home. All about her ties were in process of formation, ties that with time would grow stronger than any shackles of steel, constraining her to walk in certain ways, ways that were pleasant enough, certain of ease, if not of definite purpose.

Charlie Benton came to visit them. Strangely enough, to Stella, who had never seen him on Roaring Lake, at least dressed otherwise than as his loggers, he was sporting a natty gray suit, he was clean shaven, Oxford ties on his feet, a gentleman of leisure in his garb. If he had started on the down grade the previous winter, he bore no signs of it now, for he was the picture of ruddy vigor, clear-eyed, brown-skinned, alert, bubbling over with good spirits.

"Why, say, you look like a tourist," Fyfe remarked, after an appraising glance.

"Rats. I'm making money, pulling

ahead of the game, that's all," Benton retorted cheerfully. "I can afford to take a holiday now and then. I'm putting a million feet a month in the water. That's going some for small fry like me. Say, this house of yours is all to the good, Jack. It's got class, outside and in. Makes a man feel as if he had to live up to it, eh? Mackinaws and calked boots don't go with Oriental rugs and oak floors."

"You should get a place like this as soon as possible, then," Stella put in dryly, "to keep you up to the mark, on edge æsthetically, one might put it."

"Not to say morally," Benton laughed. "Oh, maybe I'll get to it by and by, if the timber business holds up. Leave it to me."

Later, when he and Stella were alone together, he said to her:

"You're lucky. You've got everything, and it comes without an effort. You sure showed good judgment when you picked Jack Fyfe. He's a thoroughbred."

"Oh, thank you," she returned, a touch of irony in her voice—a subtlety of inflection that went clean over Charlie's head.

He was full of inquiries about where they had been that winter, what they had done and seen. Also he brimmed over with his own affairs. He stayed overnight, and went his way with a brotherly threat of making the Fyfe bungalow his headquarters whenever he felt like it.

"It's a touch of civilization that looks good to me," he declared. "You can put my private mark on one of those big leather chairs, Jack. I'm going to use it often. All you need to make this a social center is a good-looking girl or two—unmarried ones. You watch. When the summer flock comes to the lake, your place is going to be popular."

That observation verified Benton's shrewdness. The Fyfe bungalow did become popular. A matter of two

weeks after Charlie's visit, a lean, white cruiser, all brass and mahogany above her topsides, slid up to the float, and two women came, at a dignified pace, along the path to the house. Stella had met Linda Abbey once, reluctantly, under the circumstances. But it was different now—the difference that money makes. She could play hostess against an effective background. And she did so graciously. Nor was her graciousness wholly assumed. After all, they were her kind of people; Linda, the fair-haired, perfectly gowned, perfectly mannered, sweetly pretty—Mrs. Abbey, forty-odd, and looking thirty-five, with that calm self-assurance which wealth and position confer upon those who hold it securely. Stella found them altogether to her liking. It pleased her, too, that Jack happened in to meet them. He was not a scintillating talker, yet she had noticed that, when he had anything to say, he never failed to attract and hold attention. His quiet, impersonal manner never suggested stolidness. And she was too keen an observer to overlook the fact that from a purely physical standpoint Jack Fyfe made an impression always.

"We'll expect to see a good deal of you this summer," Mrs. Abbey said cordially, at leave-taking. "We have a few people up from town now and then to vary the monotony of feasting our souls on scenery. Sometimes we are quite a jolly crowd. Don't be formal. Drop in when you feel the inclination."

When Stella reminded Jack of this some time later, in a moment of boredom, he put the *Panther* at her disposal for the afternoon. But he would not go himself. He had opened up a new outlying camp, and he had directions to issue, work to lay out.

"You hold up the social end of the game," he laughed. "I'll hustle logs."

So Stella invaded the Abbey-Mono-

han precincts by herself, and enjoyed it immensely—for she met a houseful of young people from the coast, and in that light-hearted company she forgot for the time being that she was married and the responsible mistress of a house. Paul Abbey was there, but he had apparently forgotten or forgiven the blow she had once dealt his vanity. Paul, she reflected, was not the sort to mourn a lost love long.

She had the amused experience, too, of beholding Charlie Benton appear an hour or so before she departed, and straightway monopolize Linda Abbey in his characteristically impetuous fashion. Charlie was no diplomat. He believed in driving straight to any goal he selected.

"So *that's* the reason for the outward metamorphosis," Stella reflected. "Well!"

Altogether she enjoyed the afternoon hugely. The only fly in her ointment was a greasy smudge bestowed upon her dress—a garment she prized highly—by some cordage coiled on the *Panther's* deck. The black tender had carried too many cargoes of loggers and logging supplies to be a fit conveyance for persons in party attire. She exhibited the soiled gown to Fyfe with due vexation.

"I hope you'll have somebody scrub down the *Panther* the next time I want to go anywhere in a decent dress," she said ruefully. "That'll never come out. And it's the prettiest thing I've got, too."

"Oh, what's the odds!" Fyfe slipped one arm around her. "You can buy more dresses. Did you have a good time? That's the thing."

That ruined gown, however, subsequently produced an able forty-foot cruising launch, powerfully engined, easy in a sea, and comfortably, even luxuriously, fitted as to cabin. With that for their private use, the *Panther*

was left to her appointed service, and in the new boat Fyfe and Stella spent many a day abroad on Roaring Lake. They fished together, explored nooks and bays up and down its forty miles of length, climbed hills together like the bear of the ancient rhyme, to see what they could see. And the *Water Bug* served to put them on intimate terms with their neighbors, particularly the Abbey crowd. The Abbeyes took to them whole-heartedly. Fyfe himself was highly esteemed by the elder Abbey, largely, Stella suspected, for his power on Roaring Lake. Abbey père had built up a big fortune out of timber. He respected any man who could follow the same path to success. Therefore, he gave Fyfe double credit—for making good, and for a personality that could not be overlooked. He told Stella that once—that is to say, he told her confidentially that her husband was a very “able” young man. Abbey senior was short and double-chinned, and inclined to profuse perspiration if he moved in haste over any extended time. Paul promised to be like him, in that respect.

Summer slipped by. There were dances, informal little hops at the Abbey domicile, return engagements at the Fyfe bungalow, laughter and music and Japanese lanterns strung across the lawn. There was tea and tennis and murmuring rivers of small talk. And amid this Stella Fyfe flitted graciously, esteeming it her world, a fair measure of what the future might be. Viewed in that light, it seemed passable enough.

Later, when summer was on the wane, she withdrew from much of this activity, spending those days, when she did not sit buried in a book, out on the water with her husband. When October ushered in the first of the fall rains, they went to Vancouver and took apartments.

In December, her son was born.

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CHAPTER XVII.

A CLOSE CALL AND A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

With the recurrence of spring, Fyfe's household transferred itself to the Roaring Lake bungalow again. Stella found the change welcome. Vancouver wearied her. It was a little too crude, too much as yet in the transitory stage, in that civic hobbledohoy period which overtakes every village that shoots up overswiftly to a city's dimensions. They knew people, to be sure. The Abbey influence would have opened the way for them into any circle. Stella had made many friends and pleasant acquaintances that summer on the lake. But part of that butterfly clique sought pleasanter winter grounds before she was fit for social activity. Apart from a few more or less formal receptions, an occasional auction party, she found it pleasanter to stay at home. Fyfe himself had spent only part of his time in town after their boy was born. He was extending his timber operations. What he did not put into words, but what Stella sensed because she experienced the same thing herself, was that town bored him to death, such town existence as Vancouver afforded. Their first winter had been different, because they had sought places where there was manifold variety of life, color, amusement. She was longing for the wide reach of Roaring Lake, the immense amphitheater of the mountains surrounding, long before spring.

So she was quite as well pleased when a mild April saw them domiciled at home again. In addition to Sam Foo and Feng Shu, there was a nurse for Jack, junior. Stella did not suggest that. Fyfe insisted on it. He was quietly proud of his boy, but he did not want her chained to her baby.

“If the added expense doesn't count, of course a nurse will mean a lot more

personal freedom," Stella admitted. "You see, I haven't the least idea of your resources, Jack. All I know about it is that you allow me plenty of money for my individual expenses. And I notice we're acquiring a more expensive mode of living all the time."

"That's so," Fyfe responded. "I never have gone into any details of my business with you. No reason you shouldn't know what limits there are to our income. You never happened to express any curiosity before. Operating as I did up till lately, the business netted anywhere from twelve to fifteen thousand a year. I'll double that this season. In fact, with the amount of standing timber I control, I could make it fifty thousand a year by expanding and speeding things up. I guess you needn't worry about an extra servant or two."

So, apart from voluntary service in behalf of Jack, junior, she was free, as of old, to order her days as she pleased. Yet that small morsel of humanity requisitioned much of her time, because she released through the maternal flood-gates a part of that passionate longing to bestow love where her heart willed. Sometimes she took issue with herself over that wayward tendency. By all the rules of the game, she should have loved her husband. He was like a rock, solid, enduring, patient, kind, and generous. But she never fooled herself; she never had, so far as Jack Fyfe was concerned. She liked him. That was all. He was good to her, and she was grateful.

She had recurring periods, when moodiness and ill-stifled discontent got hold of her. Sometimes she stole out along the cliffs to sit on a mossy boulder, staring with absent eyes at the distant hills. And sometimes she would slip out in a canoe to lie rocking in the lake swell—just dreaming, filled with a passive sort of regret. She could not

change things now. But she could not help wishing she could.

Fyfe warned her once about getting offshore in the canoe. Roaring Lake, pent in the shape of a boomerang between two mountain ranges, was subject to squalls. Sudden bursts of wind would shoot down its length like blasts from some monster funnel. Stella knew that. She had seen the glassy surface torn into whitecaps in ten minutes. But she was not afraid of the lake nor the lake winds. She was hard and strong. The open, the clean mountain air, and a measure of activity had built her up physically. She swam like a seal. Out in that sixteen-foot Peterboro she could detach herself from her world of reality, lie back on a cushion, and lose herself staring at the sky. She paid little heed to Fyfe's warning beyond a smiling assurance that she had no intention of courting a watery end.

So that one day in mid-July she waved a farewell to Jack, junior, crowding in his nurse's lap on the bank, paddled out past the first point to the north, and, pillowing her head on a cushioned thwart, gave herself up to dreamy contemplation of the sky. There was scarce a ripple on the lake. A faint breath of an offshore breeze fanned her, drifting the canoe at a snail's pace out from land. Stella luxuriated in the quiet afternoon. A party of campers cruising the lake had tarried at the bungalow till after midnight. Jack Fyfe had risen at dawn, to depart for some distant logging point. Stella, once wakened, had risen and breakfasted with him. She was tired, drowsy, content to lie there in pure physical relaxation. Lying so, before she was aware of it, her eyes closed.

She wakened with a start at a cold touch of moisture on her face—rain, great, pattering drops. Overhead an ominously black cloud hid the face of the sun. The shore, when she looked, lay a mile and a half abeam. To the

north, and between her and the land's rocky line, there was a darkening of the lake's surface. Stella reached for her paddle. The black cloud let fall long, gray streamers of rain. There was scarcely a stirring of the air. But that did not deceive her. There was a growing chill, and there was that broken line sweeping down the lake. Behind that was wind, a summer gale, the black squall dreaded by the Siwash.

She had to buck her way to shore through that. She drove hard on the paddle. She was not afraid, but there rose in her an odd, tensed-up feeling. Ahead lay a ticklish bit of business. The sixteen-foot canoe dwarfed to pitiful dimensions in the face of that snarling line of wind-harried water. She could hear the distant murmur of it presently, and gusty puffs of wind began to strike her.

Then it swept up to her, a ripple, a chop, and behind that very close the short, steep lake combers, with a wind that blew off the tops as each wave head broke in white, bubbling froth. Immediately she began to lose ground. She had expected that, and it did not alarm her. If she could keep the canoe bow on, there was an even chance that the squall would blow itself out in half an hour. But keeping the canoe on proved a task for stout arms. The wind would catch all that forward part which thrust clear as she topped a sea, and twist it aside, tending always to throw her broadside into the trough. Spray began to splash aboard. The seas were so short and steep that the Peterboro would rise over the crest of a tall one and dip its bow deep in the next, or leap clear to strike with a slap that made Stella's heart jump. She had never undergone quite that rough-and-tumble experience in a small craft. She was being beaten farther out and down the lake, and her arms were growing

tired. Nor was there any slackening of the wind.

The combined rain and slaps of spray soaked her thoroughly. A puddle gathered about her knees in the bilge, sloshing fore and aft as the craft pitched, killing the natural buoyancy of the canoe so that she dove harder. Stella took a chance, ceased paddling, and bailed with a small can. She got a tossing that made her head swim while she lay in the trough. And when she tried to head up into it again, one comber bigger than its fellow reared up and slapped a barrel of water inboard. The next wave swamped her.

Sunk to the clamps, Stella held fast to the topsides, crouching on her knees, immersed to the waist in water that struck a chill through her flesh. She had the wit to remember and act upon Jack Fyfe's coaching; namely, to sit tight and hang on. No sea that ever ran can sink a canoe. Wood is buoyant. So long as she could hold on, the submerged craft would keep her head and shoulders above water. But it was numbing cold. Fed by glacial streams, Roaring Lake is icy in hottest midsummer.

What with paddling and bailing and the excitement of the struggle, Stella had wasted no time gazing about for other boats approaching. She knew that if any one at the camp saw her, rescue would be speedily effected. Now, holding fast and sitting quiet, she looked eagerly about as the swamped canoe rose loggily on each wave. Almost immediately she was heartened by seeing distantly some sort of craft plunging through the blow. She had not long to wait after that, for the approaching launch was a lean-lined speeder, powerfully engined, and she was being forced. Stella supposed it was one of the Abbey runabouts. And even with her teeth chattering and that numbness fastening

itself upon her, she shivered at the chances the man was taking. It was no sea for a speed boat to smash into at thirty miles an hour. She saw it shoot off the top of one wave and disappear in a white burst of spray, slash through the next, and, burying itself deep again, fling a foamy cloud far to port and starboard. Stella cried futilely to the man to slow down. She could hang on a long time yet. But her voice carried no distance.

After that she had not long to wait. In a matter of four minutes the runabout was within a hundred yards, open exhausts crackling like a machine gun. And then the very thing she expected and dreaded came about. Every moment she looked to see him drive bows under and go down. Here and there, at intervals, uplifted a comber taller than its fellows, standing, just as it broke, like a green wall. Into one such hoary-headed sea the white boat now drove like a lance. Stella saw the spray leap like a cascade, saw the solid green curl deep over the forward deck and engine hatch, and smash the low wind shield. She heard the glass crack. Immediately the roaring exhausts died. Amid the whistle of the wind and the murmur of broken water the launch staggered like a drunken man, lurched off into the trough, deep down by the head with the weight of water she had taken.

The man in her stood up, with hands cupped over his mouth.

"Can you hang on a while longer?" he shouted. "Till I can get my boat bailed?"

"I'm all right," she called back.

She saw him heave up the engine hatch. For a minute or two he bailed rapidly. Then he spun the engine, without result. He straightened up at last, stood irresolute a second, peeled off his coat.

The launch lay heavily in the trough. The canoe, rising and clinging on the

crest of each wave, was carried forward a few feet at a time, taking the run of the sea faster than the disabled motor boat. So now a matter of only a hundred-odd feet separated them. But they could come no nearer, for the canoe was abeam, and slowly drifting past.

Stella saw the man stoop and stand up, with a coil of line in his hand. Then she gasped, for he stepped on the coaming, and plunged overboard in a beautiful, arching dive. A second later his head showed glistening above the gray water, and he swam toward her with a slow, overhand stroke. It seemed an age—although the actual time was brief enough—before he reached her. She saw then that there was method in his madness, for the line strung out behind him, fast to a cleat on the launch. He laid hold of the canoe and rested a few seconds, panting, smiling broadly at her.

"Sorry that whopping wave put me out of commission," he said at last. "I'd have had you ashore by now. Hang on now for a minute."

He made the line fast to a thwart near the bow. Holding fast with one hand, he drew the swamped canoe up to the launch. In that continuous roll it was no easy task to get Stella aboard. But they managed it, and presently she sat shivering in the cockpit, watching the man spill the water out of the Peterboro, till it rode buoyantly again. Then he went to work at his engine methodically, wiping dry the ignition terminals, all the various connections where moisture could effect a short circuit. At the end of a few minutes he turned the starting crank. The multiple cylinders fired with a roar.

He moved back behind the wrecked wind shield, where the steering gear stood.

"Well, Miss Shipwrecked Mariner," said he lightly. "Where do you wish to be landed?"

"Over there, if you please." Stella pointed to where the red roof of the bungalow stood out against the green. "I'm Mrs. Fyfe."

"Ah!" said he. An expression of veiled surprise flashed across his face. "Another potential romance strangled at birth. You know, I hoped you were some local maiden before whom I could pose as a heroic rescuer. Such is life. Odd, too. Linda Abbey—I'm the Monohan tail to the Abbey business kite, you see—impressed me as pilot for a spin this afternoon, and backed out at the last moment. I think she smelled this blow. So I went out for a ride by myself. I was glowering at that new house through a glass, when I spied you out in the thick of it."

He had the clutch in now, and the launch was cleaving the seas, even at half speed throwing out wide wings of spray. Some of this the wind brought across the cockpit.

"Come up into this seat!" Monohan commanded. "I don't suppose you can get any wetter, but if you put your feet through this bulkhead door, the heat from the engine will warm you. By Jove, you're fairly shivering."

"It's lucky for me you happened along," Stella remarked, when she was ensconced behind the bulkhead. "I was getting so cold. I don't know how much longer I could have stood it."

"Thank the good glasses that picked you out. You were only a speck on the water, you know, when I sighted you first."

He kept silent after that. All his faculties were centered on the seas ahead, which rolled up before the sharp cutwater of the launch. He was making time, and still trying to avoid boarding seas. When a big one lifted ahead, he slowed down. He kept one hand on the throttle control, whistling, under his breath, disconnected snatches of song. Stella studied his profile; clean-cut as a cameo it was, and wholly

pleasing. He was almost as big-bodied as Jack Fyfe, and full four inches taller. The wet shirt, clinging close to his body, outlined well-knit shoulders, ropy-muscled arms. He could easily have posed for a viking, so strikingly blond was he, with fair, curly hair. She judged that he might be around thirty, yet his face was boyish.

Sitting there beside him, shivering in her wet clothes, she found herself wondering what magnetic quality there could be about a man that focused a woman's attention upon him whether she willed it or no. Why should she feel an oddly disturbing thrill at the nearness of this fair-haired stranger? She did. There was no debating that.

Presently the launch slipped into the quiet nook of Cougar Bay and slowed down to the float.

Monohan helped her out, threw off the canoe's painter, and climbed back into the launch.

"You're as wet as I am," Stella said. "Won't you come up to the house and get a change of clothes? I haven't even thanked you."

"Nothing to be thanked for." He smiled up at her. "Only please remember not to get offshore in a canoe again. I mightn't be handy the next time—and Roaring Lake's as fickle as your charming sex. All smiles one minute, storming the next. No, I won't stay this time, thanks. A little wet won't hurt me. I wasn't in the water long enough to get chilled, you know. I'll be home in half an hour. Run along and get dressed, Mrs. Fyfe, and drink something hot to drive that chill away. Good-by."

Stella went up to the house, her hand tingling with his parting grip. Over and above the peril she had escaped rose an uneasy vision of a greater peril to her peace of mind. There was something about this man which had stirred her. Nothing that he said or did, merely some elusive personal at-

tribute. She had never undergone any such experience, and she puzzled over it now. A chance stranger, and his touch could make her pulse leap. It filled her with astonished dismay.

Afterward, dry clad and warm, sitting in her pet chair, Jack, junior, cooing at her from a nest among cushions on the floor, the natural reaction set in, and she laughed at herself. When Fyfe came home, she told him lightly of her rescue.

He said nothing at first, only sat drumming on his chair arm, his eyes steady on her.

"That might have cost you your life," he said at last. "Will you remember not to drift offshore again?"

"I rather think I shall," she responded. "It wasn't a pleasant experience."

"Monohan, eh?" he remarked, after another interval. "So he's on Roaring Lake again."

"Do you know him?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied briefly.

For a minute or so longer he sat there, his face wearing its habitual impassiveness. Then he got up, kissed her with a queer sort of intensity, and went out. Stella gazed after him, mildly surprised. It wasn't quite in his usual manner.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A RESURRECTION.

It might have been a week or so later that Stella made a discovery which profoundly affected the whole current of her thought. The long twilight was just beginning. She was curled on the living-room floor, playing with the baby. Fyfe and Charlie Benton sat by a window, smoking, conversing, as they frequently did, upon certain phases of the timber industry. A draft from an open window fluttered some sheet music down, off the piano rack, and Stella rescued it from Jack,

junior's, tiny, clawing hands. Some of the Abbeys had been there the evening before. One bit of music was a song Linda had tried to sing, and given up because it soared above her vocal range. Stella went to put up the music. Without any premeditated idea of playing, she sat down at the piano and began to run over the accompaniment. She could play passably.

"That doesn't seem so very hard," she thought aloud. Benton turned at sound of her words.

"Say, did you never get any part of your voice back, Stell?" he asked. "I never hear you try to sing."

"No," she answered. "I tried and tried long after you left home, but it was always the same old story. I haven't sung a note in four years."

"Linda fell down hard on that song last night," he went on. "There was a time when that wouldn't have been a starter for you, eh? Did you know Stella used to warble like a prima donna, Jack?"

Fyfe shook his head.

"Fact. The governor spent a pot of money cultivating her voice. It was some voice, too. She——"

He broke off to listen. Stella was humming the words of the song, her fingers picking at the melody instead of the accompaniment.

"Why, you *can*!" Benton cried.

"Can what?" She turned on the stool.

"Sing, of course. You got that high trill that Linda had to screech through. You got it perfectly, without effort."

"I didn't," she returned. "Why, I wasn't singing; just humming it over."

"You let out a link or two on those high notes, just the same, whether you knew you were doing it or not," her brother returned impatiently. "Go on. Turn yourself loose. Sing that song."

"Oh, I couldn't," Stella said ruefully. "I haven't tried for so long.

It's no use. My voice always cracks, and I want to cry."

"Crack fiddlesticks," Benton retorted. "I know what it used to be. Believe me, it sounded natural, even if you were just lilting. Here."

He came over to the piano, and playfully edged her off the stool.

"I'm pretty rusty," he said. "But I can fake what I can't play of this. It's simple enough. You stand there and sing."

She only stood looking at him.

"Go on!" he commanded. "I believe you can sing anything. You have to show me, if you can't."

Stella fingered the sheets reluctantly. Then she drew a deep breath, like one about to take a plunge, and began.

It was not a difficult selection, merely a bit from a current light opera, with a closing passage that ranged a trifle too high for the ordinary untrained voice to take with ease. Stella sang it effortlessly, the last high, trilling notes pouring out as sweet and clear as the carol of a lark. Benton struck the closing chord and looked up at her. Fyfe leaned forward in his chair. Jack, junior, among his pillows on the floor, waved his arms, kicking and gurgling.

"You did pretty well on that," Charlie remarked complacently. "Now sing something. Got any of your old pieces?"

"I wonder if I could?" Stella murmured. "I'm almost afraid to try."

She hurried away to some outlying part of the house, reappearing in a few minutes with a dog-eared bundle of sheets in her hand. From among these she selected three and set them on the rack.

Benton whistled when he glanced over the music.

"'The Siren Song,'" he grunted. "What is it? Something new? Lord, look at the scale! Looks like one of

those screaming arias from the 'Flying Dutchman.' Some stunt."

"Marthand composed it for the express purpose of trying out voices," Stella said. "It is a stunt."

"You'll have to play your own accompaniment." Charlie grinned. "That's too much for me."

"Oh, just so you give me a little support here and there," Stella told him. "I can't sing sitting on a piano stool."

Benton made a face at the music, and struck the keys.

It seemed to Stella nothing short of a miracle. She had been mute so long. She had almost forgotten what a tragedy losing her voice had been. And to find it again, to hear it ring like a trumpet—— It did. It was too big for the room. She felt herself caught up in a triumphant ecstasy as she sang. She found herself blinking as the last note died away. Her brother twisted about on the piano stool, fumbling for a cigarette.

"And still they say they can't come back," he remarked at last. "Why, you're better than you ever were, Stella. You've got the old sweetness and flexibility that dad used to rave about. But your voice is bigger, somehow different. It gets under a man's skin. It's amazing."

She picked up the baby from the floor, and began to play with him. She didn't want to talk. She wanted to think, to gloat over and hug to herself this miracle of her restored voice. She was very quiet, very much absorbed in her own reflections until it was time—— very shortly——to put Jack, junior, in his bed. That was a function she made wholly her own. The nurse might greet his waking whimper in the morning, and minister to his wants throughout the day, but Stella tucked him in his crib every night. And, after the little blue eyes were closed, she sat there, very still, thinking. In a de-

tached way she was conscious of hearing Charlie leave.

Later, when she was sitting beside her dressing table, brushing her hair, Fyfe came in. He perched himself on the footrail of the bed, looking silently at her. She had long grown used to that. It was a familiar trick of his.

"How did it happen that you've never tried your voice lately?" he asked, after a time.

"I gave it up long ago," she said. "Didn't I ever tell you that I used to sing, and lost my voice?"

"No," he answered. "Charlie did, just now. You rather took my breath away. It's wonderful. You'd be a sensation in opera."

"I might have been," she corrected. "That was one of my little dreams. You don't know what a grief it was to me when I got over that throat trouble and found I couldn't sing. I used to try and try—and my voice would break every time. I lost all heart to try, after a while. That was when I wanted to take up nursing, and they wouldn't let me. I haven't thought about singing for an age. I've crooned lullabies to Jacky without remembering that I once had volume enough to drown out an accompanist. Dad was awfully proud of my voice."

"You've reason to be proud of it, now," Fyfe said slowly. "It's a voice in ten thousand. What are you going to do with it?"

Stella drew the brush mechanically through her heavy hair. She had been asking herself that. What could she do? A long road and a hard one lay ahead of her or any other woman who essayed to make her voice the basis of a career. Over and above that she was not free to seek such a career. Fyfe himself knew that, and it irritated her that he should ask such a question. She swung about on him.

"Nothing," she said, a trifle tartly. "How can I? Granting that my voice

is worth the trouble, would you like me to go and study in the East, or abroad? Would you be willing to bear the expense of such an undertaking? To have me leave Jack to nursemaids, and you to your logs?"

"So that in the fullness of time I might secure a little reflected glory as the husband of Madame Fyfe, the famous soprano," he replied slowly. "Well, I can't say that's a particularly pleasing prospect."

"Then why ask me what I'm going to do with it?" she flung back impatiently. "It'll be an asset—like my looks—and—and——"

She dropped her face in her hands, choking back an involuntary sob. Fyfe crossed the room at a bound, put his arms around her.

"Stella, Stella!" he cried sharply. "Don't be a fool."

"D-don't be cross, Jack," she whispered. "Please. I'm sorry. I simply can't help it. You don't understand."

"Oh, don't I?" he said savagely. "I understand too well—that's the devil of it. But I suppose that's a woman's way—to feed her soul with illusions, and let the realities go hang. Look here."

He caught her by the shoulders and pulled her to her feet, facing him. There was a fire in his eye, a hard shutting together of his lips that frightened her a little.

"Look here," he said roughly. "Take a brace, Stella. Do you realize what sort of a state of mind you're drifting into? You married me under more or less compulsion—compulsion of circumstances. And gradually you're beginning to get dissatisfied, to pity yourself. You'll precipitate things you maybe don't dream of now, if you keep on. Now, I didn't create the circumstances. I only showed you a way out. You took it. It satisfied you for a while. You can't deny it did. But it doesn't, any more. You're nursing

a lot of illusions, Stella, that are going to make your life full of misery."

"I'm not," she sobbed. "It's because I haven't any illusions that—that— Oh, what's the use talking, Jack? I'm not complaining. I don't even know what gave me this black mood, just now. I suppose that queer miracle of my voice coming back upset me. I feel—well, as if I were a different person, somehow; as if I had forfeited any right to have it. Oh, it's silly, you'll say. But it's there. I can't help my feeling—or my lack of it."

Fyfe's face whitened a little. His hands dropped from her shoulders.

"Now you're talking to the point," he said quietly. "Especially that last. We've been married some little time now, and, if anything, we're farther apart in the essentials of mating than we were at the beginning. You've committed yourself to an undertaking—yet more and more you encourage yourself to wish for the moon. If you don't stop dreaming, and try real living, don't you see a lot of trouble ahead for yourself? It's simple. You're slowly hardening yourself against me, beginning to resent my being a factor in your life. It's only a matter of time, if you keep on, until your emotions center about some other man."

"Why do you talk like that?" she said bitterly. "Do you think I've got neither pride nor self-respect?"

"Yes. Both a-plenty," he answered. "But you're a woman, with a rather complex nature even for your sex. If your heart and your head ever clash over anything like that, you'll be in perfect hell until one or the other gets the upper hand. You're a thoroughbred, and high strung, as thoroughbreds are. It takes something besides three meals a day and plenty of good clothes to complete your existence. If I can't make it complete, some other man will make you think he can. Why don't you try, lady? Haven't I got any pos-

sibilities as a lover? Can't you throw a little halo of romance about me, for your own sake—if not for mine?"

He drew her up close to him, stroking tenderly the glossy brown hair that flowed about her shoulders.

"Try it, Stella," he whispered passionately. "Try wanting to like me, for a change. I can't make love by myself. Shake off that infernal apathy that's taking possession of you where I'm concerned. If you can't love me, *fight* with me. Do *something*."

CHAPTER XIX.

* THE CRISIS.

Looking back at that evening as the summer wore on, Stella perceived that it was the starting point of many things, no one of them definitely outstanding by itself but bulking large as a whole. Fyfe made his appeal, and it left her unmoved, save in certain superficial aspects. She was sorry. But she was mostly sorry for herself. And she denied his premonition of disaster. If, she said to herself, they got no raptures out of life, at least they got along without friction. In her mind their marriage, no matter that it lacked what she, no less than Fyfe, deemed an essential to happiness, was a fixed state, final, irrevocable, not to be altered by any emotional vagaries.

Monohan she accepted on terms of good-fellowship. He was a friend, or, at least, he became so. Inevitably they were thrown much together. There was a continual informal running back and forth between there and Abbey's. Monohan was a lily of the field—although it was common knowledge on Roaring Lake that he was a heavy stockholder in the Abbey-Monohan combination. At any rate, he was holidaying on the lake that summer. There had grown up a genuine intimacy between Linda and Stella. There were always people at the Abbeys'; some-

times a few guests at the Fyfe bungalow. Stella's marvelous voice served to heighten her popularity. The net result of it all was that in the following three months scarce three days went by that she did not have speech with Monohan.

She could not help making comparisons between the two men. They stood out in marked contrast, in manner, physique, in everything. Where Fyfe was reserved almost to taciturnity, impassive-featured—save for that whimsical gleam that was never wholly absent from his keen blue eyes—Monohan talked with facile ease, with wonderful expressiveness of face. He was a finished product of courteous generations. Moreover, he had been everywhere, done a little of everything, acquired in his manner something of the versatility of his experience. Physically he was fit as any logger in the camps, a big, active-bodied, clear-eyed, ruddy man.

What it was about him that stirred her so, Stella could never determine. She knew beyond peradventure that he had that power. He had the gift of quick, sympathetic perception. But so, too, had Jack Fyfe, she reminded herself. Yet no tone of Jack Fyfe's voice could raise a flutter in her breast, make a faint flush glow in her cheeks. And Monohan could do that. He did not need to be actively attentive. It was only necessary for him to be near.

And it dawned upon Stella Fyfe in the fullness of the season, when the first cool October days were upon them and the lake shores flamed again with the red and yellow and umber of autumn, that she had been playing with fire—and that fire burns.

This did not filter into her consciousness by degrees. She had steeled herself to seeing him pass away with the rest of the summer folk, to take himself out of her life. She admitted that there would be a gap. But that had

to be. No word other than friendly ones would ever pass between them. He would go away, and she would go on as before. That was all. She was scarcely aware how far they had traveled along that road whereon travelers converse by glance of eye, by subtle intuitions, eloquent silences. Monohan himself delivered the shock that awakened her to despairing clear-sightedness.

He had come to bring her a book, he and Linda Abbey and Charlie together—a commonplace enough little courtesy. And it happened that this day Fyfe had taken his rifle and vanished into the woods immediately after luncheon. Between Linda Abbey and Charlie Benton matters had so far progressed that it was now the most natural thing for them to seek a corner or poke along the beach together, oblivious to all but themselves. This afternoon they chatted a while with Stella, and then gradually detached themselves, until Monohan, glancing through the window, pointed them out to Stella. They were seated on a log at the edge of the lawn, a stone's throw from the house.

"They're getting on," he said. "Lucky beggars. It's all plain sailing for them."

There was a note of infinite regret in his voice, a sadness that stabbed Stella Fyfe like a lance. She did not dare look at him. Something rose chokingly in her throat. She felt and fought against a slow welling of tears to her eyes. And before she sensed that she was betraying herself, Monohan was holding both her hands fast between his own, gripping them with a fierce, insistent pressure, speaking in a passionate undertone.

"Why should we have to beat our heads against a stone wall like this?" he was saying wildly. "Why couldn't we have met and loved and been happy, as we could have been? It was fated

to happen. I felt it that day I dragged you out of the lake. It's been growing on me ever since. I've struggled against it, and it's no use. It's something stronger than I am. I love you, Stella, and it maddens me to see you chafing in your chains. Oh, my dear, why couldn't it have been different?"

"You mustn't talk like that," she protested. "You mustn't. It isn't right."

"I suppose it's right for you to live with a man you don't love, when your heart's crying out against it?" he broke out. "Do you think I can't see? I don't have to see things. I can feel them. I know you're the kind of woman who goes through hell for her conceptions of right and wrong. I honor you for that, dear. But, oh, the pity of it! Why should it have to be? Life could have held so much that is fine and true for you and I together. For you do care, don't you?"

"Whether I care or not isn't the question," she said. "I'm neither little enough nor prudish enough to deny a feeling that's big and clean. I see no shame in that. I'm afraid of it—if you can understand that. But that's neither here nor there. I know what I have to do. I married without love, with my eyes wide open. And I have to pay the price. So you must never talk to me of love. You mustn't even see me, if it can be avoided. It's better that way. We can't make over our lives to suit ourselves—at least, I can't. I must play the game according to the only rules I know. With you—foot-loose, and all the world before you—it'll die out presently."

"No," he flared. "I deny that. I'm not an impressionable boy. I know myself."

He paused, and the grip of his hands on hers tightened till the pain of it ran to her elbows. Then his fingers relaxed a little.

"Oh, I know," he said haltingly. "I know it's got to be that way. I have

to go my road and leave you to yours. And the blank hopelessness of it, the useless misery of it. We're made for each other. And we have to grin and say good-by, go along our separate ways, trying to smile, taking our medicine. What a devilish state of affairs! But I love you, dear, and no matter—I—ah——"

His voice flattened out. His hands released hers, he straightened quickly. Stella turned her head. Jack Fyfe stood in the doorway. His face was fixed in its habitual mask. He was biting the end off a cigar. And he struck a match and put it to the cigar end with steady fingers as he walked slowly across the big room.

"I hear the kid peeping," he said to Stella quite casually. "And I noticed Martha outside as I came in. Better go see what's up with him."

Trained to repression, schooled in self-control, Stella rose to obey. Obey serves rightly, for under the smoothness of his tone there was the iron edge of command. She tried to smile, but she knew that her face was tear-wet. She knew that Jack Fyfe had seen, and understood. She had done no wrong. But a terrible apprehension of consequences seized her, a fear that tragedy of her own making might stalk grisly in that room.

She lingered a second or two outside the door, quaking. But there arose only the sound of Fyfe's heavy body settling into a leather chair, and following that, the low, even rumble of his voice. She could not distinguish words. The tone sounded ordinary, conversational. She prayed that his intent was to ignore the situation, that Monohan would meet him halfway in that effort. Afterward there would be a reckoning. But for herself she neither thought nor feared. It was a problem to be faced, that was all. And so, the breath of her coming in short, quick respirations, she went to her

room. There was no wailing from the nursery. She had known that.

Sitting beside a window, chin in hand, her lower lip compressed between her teeth, she saw Fyfe, after the lapse of ten minutes, leave by the front entrance, stopping to chat a minute with Linda and Charlie Benton, who were moving slowly toward the house. Stella rose to her feet, dabbed at her face with a powdered chamois. She couldn't let Monohan go like that. No. Her heart cried out against it. Very likely they would never meet again.

She flew down the hall to the living room. Monohan stood just within the front door, gazing irresolutely over his shoulder. He took a step or two to meet her. His clean-cut face was drawn into sullen lines, a deep flush mantled his cheek.

"Listen," he said tensely: "I've been made to feel like—like—— Well, I controlled myself. I knew it had to be that way. It was unfortunate. I think we could have been trusted to do the decent thing. You and I were bred to do that. I've got a little pride. I can't come here again. And I want to see you once more before I leave here for good. I'll be going away next week. That'll be the end of it—the bitter finish. Will you slip down to the first point south of Cougar Bay about three in the afternoon to-morrow? It'll be the last and only time. Can't I talk to you for twenty minutes?"

"No," she whispered forlornly. "I can't do that. I—oh, good-by—good-by."

"Stella, Stella!" she heard his vibrant whisper follow after. But she ran. Away through dining room and hall to the bedroom, there to fling herself face down, choking back the passionate protest that welled up within her. She lay there, her face buried in the pillow, until the sputtering exhaust of the Abbey cruiser growing fainter and more faint told her they were gone.

She heard her husband walk through the house once after that. When dinner was served, he was not there. It was eleven o'clock by the timepiece on her mantel when she heard him come in. But he did not come to their room. He went quietly into a guest chamber across the hall.

She waited through a leaden period. Then, moved by an impulse she did not attempt to define, a mixture of motives, pity for him, a craving for the outlet of words, a desire to set herself right before him, she slipped on a dressing robe and crossed the hall. The door swung open noiselessly. Fyfe sat slumped in a chair, hat pulled low on his forehead, hands thrust deep in his pockets. He did not even look up. His eyes stared straight ahead, absent, unseeingly fixed on nothing. He seemed to be unconscious of her presence, or to ignore it. She could not tell which.

CHAPTER XX.

AND AFTERWARD.

"Jack," she said. And when he made no response, she said again tremulously—that unyielding silence chilling her: "Jack."

He stirred a little, but only to take off his hat and lay it on a table beside him. With one hand pushing back mechanically the straight, reddish-tinged hair from his brow, he looked up at her and said briefly, in a tone barren of all emotion:

"Well?"

She was suddenly dumb. Words failed her utterly. Yet there was much to be said, much that was needful to say. They could not go on with a cloud like that over them, a cloud that had to be dissipated in the crucible of words. Yet she could not begin. Fyfe, after a prolonged silence, seemed to grasp her difficulty. Abruptly he began to speak, cutting, after his fashion, straight to the heart of his subject.

"It's a pity things had to take this particular turn," said he. "But now that you're face to face with something definite, what do you propose to do about it?"

"Nothing," she answered slowly. "I can't help the feeling. It's there. But I can thrust it into the background, go on as if it didn't exist. There's nothing else for me to do that I can see. I'm sorry, Jack."

"So am I," he said grimly. "Still, it was a chance we took—or I took, rather. I seem to have made a mistake or two, in my estimate of both you and myself. That is human enough, I suppose. You're making a bigger mistake than I did, though, to let Monohan sweep you off your feet."

There was something that she read for contempt in his tone. It stung her.

"He hasn't swept me off my feet, as you put it!" she cried. "Good heavens, do you think I'm that spineless sort of creature? I've never forgotten I'm your wife. I've got a little self-respect left yet, if I was weak enough to grasp at the straw you threw me in the beginning. I was honest with you then. I'm trying to be honest with you now."

"I know, Stella," he said gently. "I'm not throwing mud. It's an unfortunate state of affairs, that's all. I foresaw something of the sort when we were married. You were candid enough about your attitude. But I told myself, like a conceited fool, that I could make your life so full that in a little while I'd be the only possible figure on your horizon. I've failed. I've known for some time that I was going to fail. You're not the thin-blooded type of woman that is satisfied with pleasant surroundings and any sort of man. You're bound to run the gamut of all the emotions, some time and somewhere. I loved you, and I thought, in my conceit, I could make myself the

man, the one man who would mean everything to you.

"Just the same," he continued, "you've been a fool, and I don't see how you can avoid paying the penalty for folly."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"You haven't tried to play the game," he answered tensely. "For months you've been withdrawing into your shell. You've been clanking your chains and half-heartedly wishing for some mysterious power to strike them off. It wasn't a thing you undertook lightly. It isn't a thing—marriage, I mean—that you hold lightly. That being the case, you would have been wise to try making the most of it, instead of making the worst of it. But you let yourself drift into a state of mind where you—well, you see the result. I saw it coming. I didn't need to happen in this afternoon to know that there were undercurrents of feeling swirling about. And so the way you feel now is in itself a penalty. If you let Monohan cut any more figure in your thoughts, you'll pay bigger in the end."

"I can't help my thoughts, or I should say my feelings," she said wearily.

"You think you love him," Fyfe made low reply. "As a matter of fact, you love what you think he is. I dare say that he has sworn his love by all that's good and great. But if you were convinced that he didn't really care, that his flowery protestations had a double end in view, would you still love him?"

"I don't know," she murmured. "But that's beside the point. I do. I know it's unwise. It's a feeling that has overwhelmed me in a way that I didn't believe possible, that I had hoped to avoid. But—but I can't pretend, Jack. I don't want you to misunderstand. I don't want this to make us both miserable. I don't want it to generate an atmosphere of suspicion and jealousy. We'd only be fighting about a shadow.

I never cheated at anything in my life. You can trust me still, can't you?"

"Absolutely," Fyfe answered, without hesitation.

"Then that's all there is to it," she replied, "unless—unless you're ready to give me up as a hopeless case, and let me go away and blunder along the best I can."

He shook his head.

"I haven't even considered that," he said. "Very likely it's unwise of me to say this—it will probably antagonize you—but I know Monohan better than you do. I'd go pretty far to keep you two apart—now—for your own sake."

"It would be the same if it were any other man," she muttered. "I can understand your feeling like that. It's so—so typically masculine."

"No, you're wrong there—dead wrong!" Fyfe frowned. "I'm not a self-sacrificing brute, by any means. Still, knowing that you only live with me on sufferance, if you were honestly in love with a man that I felt was half-way decent, I'd put my feelings in my pocket and let you go. But Monohan—I don't want to talk about him. I trust you, Stella. I'm banking on your own good sense. And along with that good, natural common sense, you've got so many illusions, lady. About life in general, and about men. They seem to have centered about this one particular man. I can't open your eyes, nor put you on the right track. That's a job for yourself. All I can do is to sit back and wait."

His voice trailed off huskily.

Stella put a hand on his shoulder.

"Do you care so much as all that, Jack?" she whispered. "Even in spite of what you know?"

"For two years now," he answered, "you've been the biggest thing in my life. I don't change easy. I don't want to change. But I'm getting hopeless."

"I'm sorry, Jack," she said. "I can't

begin to tell you how sorry I am. I didn't love you to begin with——"

"And you've always resented that!" he broke in. "You've hugged that ghost of a loveless marriage to your bosom, and sighed for the real romance you'd missed. Well, maybe you did. But you haven't found it yet. I'm very sure of that, although I doubt if I could convince you."

"Let me finish," she pleaded. "You knew I didn't love you—that I was worn out and desperate, and clutching at the life line you threw. In spite of that—well, if I fight down this love, or fascination, or infatuation, or whatever it is—I'm not sure myself, except that it affects me strongly—can't we be friends again?"

"Friends! Oh, hell!" Fyfe exploded.

He came up out of his chair with a blaze in his eyes that startled her, caught her by the arm, and thrust her out the door.

"Friends? You and I?" He sank his voice to a harsh whisper. "Good Lord—friends! Go to bed. Good night."

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH THERE IS A FURTHER CLASH.

Stella came down to breakfast calmly enough. The situation could not be altered by heroics, by tears and wailings. Not that she was much given to either. She tried to meet her husband as if nothing had happened, in which she succeeded outwardly very well indeed, since Fyfe himself chose to ignore any change in their mutual attitude.

She busied herself about the house that forenoon, seeking deliberately a multitude of little tasks to occupy her hands and her mind.

But when lunch was over, she was at the end of her resources. Jack, junior, settled in his crib for a nap. Fyfe went away to that area back of the camp, where the crash of falling

trees arose and the labored puffing of donkey engines. She could hear faint and far the voices of the falling gangs that cried: "Tim-ber-r-r-r!" She could see on the bank, a little beyond the bunk house and cook shack, the big roader spooling up the cable that brought string after string of logs down to the lake. Rain or sun, happiness or sorrow, the work went on. She found it in her heart to envy the sturdy loggers. They could forget their troubles in the strain of action. It irritated her, too, keyed as she was to that high pitch, that sense of their unremitting activity, the ravaging of the forest which produced the resources for which she had sold herself. She was very bitter when she said that.

She longed for some secluded place to sit and think—or try to stop thinking. And without fully realizing the direction she took, she walked down past the camp, crossed the skid road, stepping lightly over main line and haul-back at the donkey engineer's warning, and went along the lake shore.

A path wound through the belt of brush and hardwood that fringed the lake. Not until she had followed this up on the neck of a little promontory south of the bay, did she remember, with a shock, that she was approaching the place where Monohan had begged her to meet him. She looked at her watch. Two-thirty. She sought the shore line for sight of a boat, wondering if he would come, in spite of her refusal. But, to her great relief, she saw no sign of him. Probably he had thought better of it, had seen now, as she had seen then, that no good and an earnest chance of evil might come of such a clandestine meeting, had taken her stand as final.

She was glad, because she did not want to go back to the house. She did not want to make the effort of wandering away in the other direction to find that restful peace of woods and water.

She moved up a little on the point until she found a mossy boulder, and sat down on that, resting her chin in her palms, looking out over the placid surface of the lake with somber eyes.

And so Monohan surprised her. The knoll lay thick carpeted with moss. He was within a few steps of her, when a twig, cracking underfoot, apprised her of some one's approach. She rose, with an impulse to fly, to escape a meeting she had not desired. And as she rose, the breath stopped in her throat.

Twenty feet behind Monohan came Jack Fyfe, with his hunter's stride, soundlessly over the moss, a rifle drooping in the crook of his arm. A sun-beam, striking obliquely between two firs, showed her his face plainly, the faint curl of his upper lip.

Something in her look arrested Monohan. He glanced around, twisted about, froze in his tracks, his back to her. Fyfe came up. Of the three, he was the coolest, the most rigorously self-possessed. He glanced from Monohan to his wife, back to Monohan. After that his blue eyes never left the other man's face.

"What did I say to you yesterday?" Fyfe opened his mouth at last. "But then I might have known I was wasting my breath on *you*."

"Well," Monohan retorted insolently. "What are you going to do about it? This isn't the Stone Age."

Fyfe laughed unpleasantly.

"Lucky for you. You'd have been eliminated long ago," he said. "No, it takes the present age to produce such rotten specimens as you."

A deep flush rose in Monohan's cheeks. He took a step toward Fyfe, his hands clenched.

"You wouldn't say that if you weren't armed," he taunted hoarsely.

"No?" Fyfe cast the rifle to one side. It fell with a metallic clink against a stone. "I do say it, though,

you see. You are a sort of a yellow dog, Monohan. You know it, and you know that I know it. That's why it stings you to be told so."

Monohan stepped back, and slipped out of his coat. His face was crimson. "I'll teach you something!" he snarled.

He lunged forward as he spoke, shooting a straight-arm blow for Fyfe's face. It swept through empty air, for Fyfe, poised on the balls of his feet, ducked under the driving fist—and slapped Monohan across the mouth with the open palm of his hand.

"Tag," he said sardonically. "You're it!"

Monohan pivoted, and, rushing, swung right and left, missing by inches. Fyfe's mocking grin seemed to madden him completely. He rushed again, launching another vicious blow, that threw him partly off his balance. Before he could recover, Fyfe kicked both feet from under him, sent him sprawling on the moss.

Stella stood like one stricken. The very thing she dreaded had come about. Yet the manner of its unfolding was not as she had visualized it when she saw Fyfe near at hand. She saw now a side of her husband that she had never glimpsed, that she found hard to understand. She could have understood him beating Monohan senseless, if he could. A murderous fury of jealousy would not have surprised her. This did. He had not struck a blow, did not attempt to strike.

She could not guess why, but she saw—that he was playing with Monohan, making a fool of him, for all Monohan's advantage of height and reach. Fyfe moved like the light, always beyond Monohan's vengeful blows, slipping under those driving fists to slap his adversary, to trip him, mocking him with the futility of his effort.

She felt herself powerless to stop that sorry exhibition. It was not a

fight for her. Dimly she had a feeling that back of her lay something else. An echo of it had been more than once in Fyfe's speech. Here and now, they had forgotten her at the first word. They were engaged in a struggle for mastery, sheer brute determination to hurt each other, which had little or nothing to do with her. She foresaw, watching the odd combat with a feeling akin to fascination, that it was a losing game for Monohan. Fyfe was his master at every move.

Yet he did not once attempt to strike a solid blow, nothing but that humiliating, open-handed slap, that dexterous swing of his foot that plunged Monohan headlong. He grinned steadily, a cold grimace that reflected no mirth, being merely a sneering twist of his features. Stella knew the deadly strength of him. She wondered at his purpose, how it would end.

The elusive light-footedness of the man, the successive stinging of those contemptuous slaps at last maddened Monohan into ignoring the rules by which men fight. He dropped his hands, stood panting with his exertions. Suddenly he kicked, a swift lunge for Fyfe's body.

Fyfe leaped aside. Then he closed. Powerful and weighty a man as Monohan was, Fyfe drove him halfway around with a short-arm blow that landed near his heart, and, while he staggered from that, clamped one thick arm about his neck in the strangle hold. Holding him helpless, bent backward across his broad chest, Fyfe slowly and systematically choked him. Shut off his breath until Monohan's tongue protruded and his eyes bulged glassily, and horrible, gurgling noises issued from his gaping mouth.

"Jack, Jack!" Stella found voice to shriek. "You're killing him!"

Fyfe lifted his eyes to hers. The horror he saw there may have stirred him. Or he may have considered his

object accomplished. Stella could not tell. But he flung Monohan from him with a force that sent him reeling a dozen feet, to collapse on the moss. It took him a full minute to regain his breath, to rise to unsteady feet, to find his voice.

"You can't win all the time!" he gasped. "I'll show you that you can't."

With that he turned and went back the way he had come. Fyfe stood silent, hands resting on his hips, watching until, from under cover of overhanging alders, Monohan pushed out a slim speed launch and set off down the lake.

"Well," he remarked then, in a curiously detached, impersonal tone. "The lightning will begin to play by and by, I suppose."

"What do you mean?" Stella asked breathlessly.

He did not answer. His eyes turned to her slowly. She saw now that his face was white and rigid, that the line of his lips drew harder together as he looked at her. But she was not prepared for the storm that broke. She did not comprehend the tempest that raged within him until he had her by the shoulders, his fingers crushing into her soft flesh like the jaws of a trap, shaking her as a terrier might shake a rat, till the heavy coils of hair cascaded over her shoulders, and for a second fear tugged at her heart. For she thought he meant to kill her.

When he did desist, he released her with a thrust of his arms that sent her staggering against a tree, shaken to the roots of her being. Not so much with fear. Anger had displaced that. A hot protest against his brute strength, against the passionate outbreak stirred her.

She faced him, trembling, leaning against the tree trunk, staring at him in impotent rage. And the fire died out of his eyes as she looked. He drew a deep breath or two and turned away

to pick up his rifle. When he faced about with that in his hand, the old mask of immobility was in place. He waited while Stella gathered up her scattered hairpins, made shift to coil her hair into a semblance of order. Then he said gently:

"I won't break out like that again."

"Once is enough."

"More than enough—for me," he answered.

"I can't stand this!" she cried. "It's beyond endurance. We're like flint and steel to each other now. If to-day's a sample of what we may expect, it's better to make a clean sweep of everything. I've got to get away from here, and from you—from everybody."

Fyfe motioned her to a near-by log.

"Sit down," said he. "We may as well have it out here."

For a few seconds he busied himself with a cigar, removing the band with utmost deliberation, biting the end off, applying the match, his brows puckered slightly.

"It's very unwise of you to meet Monohan like that," he uttered finally.

"Oh, I see!" she flashed. "Do you suggest that I met him purposely—by appointment? Even if I did——"

"That's for you to say, Stella," he interrupted gravely. "I told you last night that I trusted you absolutely. I do, so far as really vital things are concerned. I don't always trust your judgment. I merely know that Monohan sneaked along shore, hid his boat, and stole through the timber to where you were sitting. I happened to see him, and I followed him to see what he was up to—why he should take such measures to keep under cover."

"The explanation is simple," she answered stiffly. "You can believe it or not, as you choose. My being there was purely unintentional. If I had seen him before he was close, I should certainly not have been there. I have been at odds with myself all day—and

I went for a walk, to find a quiet place where I could sit and think."

"It doesn't matter now," he said. "Only you'd better try to avoid things like that in the future. Would you mind telling me just exactly what you meant a minute ago? Just what you propose to do?"

He asked her that as one might make any commonplace inquiry, but his quietness did not deceive Stella.

"What I said," she began desperately. "Wasn't it plain enough? It seems to me our life is going to be a nightmare from now on if we try to live it together. I—I'm sorry, but you know how I feel. It may be unwise—but these things aren't dictated by reason. You know that. If our emotions were guided by reason and expediency, we'd be altogether different. Last night I was willing to go and make the best of things. To-day—especially after this—it looks impossible. You'll look at me and guess what I'm thinking, and hate me. And I'll grow to hate you, because you'll be little better than a jailer. Oh, don't you see that the way we'll feel will make us utterly miserable? Why should we stick together when no good can come of it? You've been good to me. I've appreciated that, and liked you for it. I'd like to be friends. But I—I'd hate you with a perfectly murderous hatred if you were always on the watch, always suspecting me; if you taunted me as you did a while ago. I'm just as much a savage at heart as you are, Jack Fyfe. I could gladly have killed you when you were jerking me about back yonder."

"I wonder if you are, after all, a little more of a primitive being than I've supposed?"

Fyfe leaned toward her, staring fixedly into her eyes—eyes that were bright with unshed tears.

"And I was holding the devil in me down there because I didn't want to

horrify you with anything like brutality," he went on thoughtfully. "You think I grinned and made a monkey of *him* because it pleased me to do that? Why, I could have—and ached to break him into little bits, to smash him up so that no one would ever take pleasure in looking at him again. And I didn't, simply and solely because I didn't want to let you have even a glimpse of what I'm capable of when I get started. I wonder if I made a mistake? It was merely the reaction from letting him go scot-free, that made me shake you so. I wonder—well, never mind. Go on."

"I think it's better that I should go away," Stella said. "It was a mistake in the beginning, our marriage."

"Nevertheless," Fyfe said slowly, "I'm afraid it's a mistake you'll have to abide by—for a time. All that you say may be true, although I don't admit it myself. Offhand, I'd say you were simply trying to welsh on a fair bargain. I'm not going to let you do it blindly, all wrought up to a pitch where you can scarcely think coherently. If you are fully determined to break away from me, you owe it to us both to be sure of what you're doing before you act. I'm going to talk plain. You can believe it and disdain it if you please. If you were leaving me for a man, a real man, I think I could bring myself to make it easy for you, and wish you luck. But you're not. He's——"

"Can't we leave him out of it?" she demanded. "I want to get away from you both. Can you understand that? It doesn't help you any to pick *him* to pieces."

"No, but it might help you, if I could rip off that swathing of idealization you've wrapped around him," Fyfe observed patiently. "It's not a job I have much stomach for, however, even if you were willing to let me try. But to come back. You've got to stick it

out with me, Stella. You'll hate me for the constraint, I suppose. But until—until things shape up differently—you'll understand what I'm talking about by and by, I think—you've got to abide by the bargain you made with me. I couldn't force you to stay, I know. But there's one hold you can't break—not if I know you at all."

"What is that?" she asked icily.

"The kid's," he murmured.

Stella buried her face in her hands for a minute.

"I'd forgotten—I'd forgotten!" she whispered.

"You understand, don't you?" he said hesitatingly. "If you leave, I keep our boy."

"Oh, you're devilish—to use a club like that!" she cried. "You know I wouldn't part from my baby—the only thing I've got that's worth having."

"He's worth something to me, too, lady," Fyfe muttered hoarsely. "A lot more than you think, maybe. I'm not trying to club you. There's nothing in it for me. But for him; well, he needs you. It isn't his fault he's here, nor that you're unhappy. I've got to protect him, see that he gets a fair shake. I can't see anything to it but for you to go on being Mrs. Jack Fyfe until such time as you get back to a normal poise."

"You have everything on your side," she admitted dully, after a long interval of silence. "I'm a fool. I admit it. Have things your way. But it won't work, Jack. This flare-up between us will only smolder. I think you lay a little too much stress on Monohan. It isn't that I love him so much, as that I don't love you at all. I can live without him—which I mean

to do in any case—far easier than I can live with you. It won't work."

"Don't worry," he replied. "You won't be annoyed by me in person. I'll have my hands full elsewhere."

They rose and walked on to the house. On the porch, Jack, junior, was being wheeled back and forth in his pram. He lifted chubby arms to his mother as she came up the steps. Stella carried him inside, hugging the sturdy, blue-eyed mite close to her breast. She did not want to cry, but she could not help it. It was as if she had been threatened with irrevocable loss of that precious bit of her own flesh and blood. She hugged him to her, whispering mother talk, half hysterical, wholly tender.

Fyfe stood aside for a minute. Then he came up behind her, stood resting one hand on the back of her chair.

"Stella."

"Yes."

"I got word from my sister and her husband this morning's mail. They will very likely be here next week for a three day's stay. Brace up. Let's try and keep our skeleton from rattling while they're here. Will you?"

"All right, Jack. I'll try."

He patted her tousled hair lightly, and left the room. Stella looked after him with a surge of mixed feeling. She told herself she hated him and his dominant will that always beat her own down; she hated him for his amazing strength, and for his unvarying sureness of himself. And in the same breath she found herself wondering if—with their status reversed—Walter Monohan would be as patient, as gentle, as self-controlled with a wife who openly acknowledged her affection for another man.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The third part of this novel will appear in the next issue of the POPULAR MAGAZINE, on sale May 7th.



A TWICE-TOLD TALE

HISTORY has a way of repeating herself even when the listeners remain heedless. Using him as her mouthpiece, History had President Wilson say in a speech delivered in St. Louis, on February 3, 1916:

"Do you realize the task of the navy? Have you ever let your imagination dwell upon the enormous stretch of coast from the Canal to Alaska, from the Canal to the northern coast of Maine? There is no other navy in the world that has to cover so great an area, an area of defense, as the American navy. And it ought, in my judgment, to be incomparably the greatest navy in the world."

Hardly were these words out of the president's mouth, when the press and people united in a clamor, for the most part against the advocacy of such sweeping statement and course of action. His mildest critics allowed that the president had been carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, that this was more oratory than sense. If such be the case, it is pertinent to cite an illustrious predecessor, who might have given Mr. Wilson his very words. History, using John Caldwell Calhoun as her mouthpiece, caused him to say in a speech delivered in the House of Representatives, on January 31, 1816:

"Let us now consider the measures of preparation which sound policy dictates. . . . We ought to omit no preparation fairly within the compass of our means. Next, as to the species of preparation—a question which opens subjects of great extent and influence. The navy, most certainly, in any point of view, occupies the first place. It is the most safe, most effectual, and cheapest mode of defense. For, let the fact be remembered, our navy costs less per man, including all the amount of extraordinary expenditures on the Lakes, than the army.

"This is an important fact which ought to be fixed in the memory of the House; for, if the force be the safest and most efficient, which is at the same time the cheapest, on that should be our principal reliance. We have heard much of the danger of standing armies to our liberties—the objection cannot be made to the navy. Generals, it must be acknowledged, have often advanced at the head of armies to imperial rank and power; but in what instance has an admiral usurped the liberties of his country? Put our strength in the navy for foreign defense, and we shall certainly escape the whole catalogue of

possible ills painted by gentlemen on the other side. . . . And where are we most exposed? On the Atlantic line: a line so long and weak that we are peculiarly liable to be assailed on it. How is it to be defended? By a navy, and by a navy only, can it be effectually defended. . . . I think it proper to press this point thus strongly, because, though it is generally assented to, that the navy ought to be increased, I find that assent too cold—the approbation bestowed on it too negative in its character. The navy ought, it is said, to be gradually increased. If the navy is to be increased at all, let its augmentation be limited only by your ability to build, officer, and man. If it is the kind of force most safe, and at the same time most efficient to guard against foreign invasion, or repel foreign aggression, you ought to put your whole force on the seaside.”

The temptation to italicize phrases in this speech has been nigh irresistible, but the reader will doubtless put his finger on the same places.

SIMPLE?

PERSONALLY, we have more than once longed for the golden days of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when every man who was sufficiently gifted to write might spell as he wished. And only a short time ago, a matter of weeks, to be exact, we caught a gleam of promise in that direction, for the association which had hitherto determinedly called itself “The Simplified Speling Sosiety” announced that it was its set purpose hereafter to be known simply as “The Simplifyd Speling Sosyety.” We await future announcements with keen anticipation, and meanwhile amuse ourselves wondering what new changes can be rung in.

“COAL-OIL JOHNNYS” WANTED

FROM fifteen to twenty-five cents a gallon is quite a jump in price for any common commodity, but gasoline has taken the leap, and the indications are that it will go higher before very long, and consumers will have to give as much as thirty-five cents a gallon for it. Use of gasoline has enormously increased, while the production of it has diminished. Recently, in a report to the Senate, Secretary Lane presented the facts in the case. In that résumé of the situation it was found that consumption of this most important distillate of petroleum is increasing 25% annually. Thus, in 1904, the United States used 5,800,000 barrels of gasoline; in 1909 it amounted to 10,800,000 barrels; in 1914 it reached the total of 18,000,000 barrels; and experts estimate that the consumption of gasoline in the present year will round up some 30,000,000 barrels. The output has not kept abreast of the constantly growing demand, and, indeed, there has been a slump in the production of petroleum in the Texas and Oklahoma oil fields ranging from 35% to 50%.

Aside from our own consumption, it is calculated that we furnish 65% of the world's stock of gasoline. Authoritative figures place our total known resources of petroleum at about 5,560,000,000 barrels, which would be enough to supply the present rate of demand for twenty-three years. But hope rests on as yet unknown fields, especially in Utah, California, Wyoming, and Colorado. They are regarded as future bases of supply, and it behooves adventurous and chance-loving Americans to get busy and seek for the hidden wells. Otherwise, the

inventive and scientific orders of mankind will have to employ their brains and energies toward finding a substitute for gasoline. Any solution of the grave problem will bring thanksgiving to our two or three million owners of automobiles, as well as to countless users of gas engines in boats, farm machinery, and small manufactories.

ALWAYS ROOM AT THE TOP

A GENERAL supposition that banks do not offer great opportunity for promotion is controverted in the case of the Fifth Avenue Bank of New York City. The bank is known among big banking institutions of the city as the "school for bank officers," and this reputation is again borne out by the recent election to the presidency of the institution of Theodore Hetzler, who began his business career, twenty-five years ago, as office boy and bank messenger. From that humble position Mr. Hetzler has worked his way up through all the departments to the presidency.

On the board of directors of the Fifth Avenue Bank, there are four men who began their careers as messengers. These are all now in high positions in the realms of finance and big business. In addition to being president of the Fifth Avenue Bank, which is regarded as among the richest banks in the world, Theodore Hetzler is also vice president and director of Four Hundred Park Avenue Company, vice president and director of Fullerton-Weaver Realty Company, treasurer and director of Holland Court Realty Company, director of McNab & Harlin Manufacturing Company, and treasurer and director of Shafpa Realty Corporation.

Other directors of the Fifth Avenue Bank, who have risen from the position of messenger, are James G. Cannon, formerly president of the Fourth National Bank; William H. Porter, member of J. P. Morgan & Co., and Bertram H. Fancher, vice president of the Fifth Avenue Bank. James G. Cannon is connected with eighteen different banks, trust companies, chambers of commerce, guarantee companies, universities, hospitals, and other institutions, in capacities of trustee, president, chairman of board, vice president, treasurer, or director. William H. Porter is connected, in similar capacities, with fifteen different financial and other institutions; and B. H. Fancher is also a director in the Fifth Avenue Bank, of which he is vice president.

THE FIRST PLAY GIVEN IN AMERICA

IN the year 1606, when Shakespeare gave *Macbeth* and *Lear* to the London stage, a company of French adventurers at Port Royal, Acadie, were planning an outdoor masque in honor of the return of their chief, the Sieur de Poutrincourt, who had been upon a trip of exploration along the New England coast. Marc Lescarbot, one of the Acadians, conceived the idea of writing and presenting the play under these circumstances. As he afterward wrote in his "History of New France":

Just as we were looking for his return with great longing—for had ill befallen him [De Poutrincourt] we should have been in danger of confusion—I bethought myself of setting forth some piece of merriment, which we did. And, as it was written hurriedly in French rhymes, I have put it in *Les Muses de la Nouvelle-France*, to which the reader is referred.

Examination of *Les Muses*, by Lescarbot, printed in Paris, 1609, reveals

the masque under the title, *Le Théâtre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France*. It is a composition of some two hundred and fifty lines. The cast of characters includes Neptune, six Tritons, four Indians, and a Jovial Attendant. At the opening of the masque, Neptune is discovered clad in blue robe and socks, seated in a floating chariot, his trident grasped in his hand. Gayly over the waves the six Tritons bear the sea king to the vessel on which is De Poutrincourt. Reaching the chief of the Port Royal settlement, Neptune hails him as "Sagamos!" and then proceeds to tell him that he is his favorite son among men, that he will ever protect him against the dangers of the deep, and finally Neptune foretells a glorious empire for France in the New World. Here a trumpet blares. Now speak the Tritons, one after another, praising Neptune, extolling the bravery of De Poutrincourt, and calling upon France to witness the great achievements of her sons. At this juncture the four Indians paddle up in a canoe, bearing gifts of moose meat, beaver skins, and shell ornaments. The red men have long speeches to deliver, and while offering tokens they do not forget to beg for "caraconas," or bread. Thereupon, De Poutrincourt expresses thanks to Neptune and the Indians, and invites them to the fort. In reply, the Tritons sing a song. Once more the trumpet sounds, followed by the guns of the fort in salvos. The masque ends with De Poutrincourt going to the fort, where the Jovial Attendant greets him with promises of substantial cheer of all sorts.

We have Lescarbot's word for it that the masque was "représentée sur les flots du Port Royal le quatorzième de Novembre mille six cens six, au retour du Sieur de Poutrincourt du pais des Armouchiquois."

CAMELS IN THE ARIZONA DESERT

ORDINARILY, all of us know little enough of the history of our own State, and less of others. Recently we became interested in a history of Arizona, which had just been issued under the direction and auspices of its legislature, Thomas E. Farish being the author chosen for the task. The narrative was full of romance—the Spanish explorations and missions, the seven cities of Cibola, the fascination of the old Santa Fe Trail, and the deeds and adventures of Kit Carson, Kearney, Doniphan, and all the rest. Heroes there were aplenty, and rogues and thieves were everywhere. But among the manifold events that were fast and furious during the period of settlement and upbuilding of the State by white men, we were impressed by the unique episode of the introduction of camels upon the scene. It was comic and tragic.

Baffled by what was then called "The Great American Desert," the authorities hit on the happy idea of having camels for transportation purposes across the vast tract of sand. Forthwith, in 1855, Congress made a special appropriation for the purchase of a herd of the animals. Army and navy officers were commissioned to round up camels from Cairo and Smyrna, which they accomplished, also importing some Oriental drivers at the same time. The animals arrived safely enough, and plowed through the desert of Arizona without undue emotion. Indeed, they also proved equal to mountains and volcanic rocks. Nothing fazed the camels. But the Indians were afraid of the strange beasts, and the white men distrusted them as carriers. Besides, there was not enough business crossing the desert. Finally, it appeared that nobody wanted the poor camels, and they were turned adrift in the desert to die, far from Mecca and the Prophet. What became of them is left to our imagination.

Jimmy's Ghost

By H. C. Witwer

Author of "Over the Jumps," "A Little Knowledge," Etc.

Which might also be called "Susie's Band," an equally apt title, which you will appreciate when you have read this amusing story of the ingenious newspaper man who undertook to make his paper boom, and incidentally spread the fame of his small town, with the help of a ghost and a band.

LUCIUS ELI WAINWRIGHT, undisputed owner of the Bentonville Times, sat at his desk, in the little office on the ground floor of the two-story Times Building, listening attentively to an insistent rapping on his door. Lucius, alluded to as "Luscious" by a disrespectful staff, never answered anything, be it human, telephone, or doorbell, at the first word, ring, or tap. He cherished the delusion that it lent his massive frame additional dignity to make the world await his pleasure. He was of the type, who, after you have dashed into their office and hung over their desk, panting out an accurate description of, say, the assassination of a president, gasped out the assurance that the story is exclusive, and you have pictures—will look up at you with a perfectly blank expression, and remark:

"Heh?"

And with the greatest difficulty you throttle the desire to commit manslaughter.

On this occasion, Wainwright allowed his caller to abuse his knuckles for a good three minutes before, tiring of the sport, he lifted his leonine head and boomed:

"Come in!"

The door opened very slowly, and a slim, exquisitely attired youth stepped uncertainly into the room, eying Wainwright with some reproach. As the mighty Luscious impaled him with a glaring eye, the visitor twirled his cane nervously with one hand, while he fingered the ends of his travesty on a mustache with the other. He said nothing, but advanced, or, rather, sidled to the desk, as though he momentarily expected to be stabbed in the back or dynamited by some hidden foe.

"Well! Well!" roared Wainwright suddenly, feasting his soul on the other's cringing attitude. "What do you want? Hurry up and make it brief!"

"Yes, sir!" answered the visitor nervously. He mastered his patent panic with an obvious effort, and continued faintly: "My name is Edmundson—Clarence R. Edmundson, and I——"

"What's that to me?" demanded Wainwright, breaking in noisily on the trembling youth's confession. "I don't care if your name is Steve X. Brown or George W. Whangdoodle. Do you mean to tell me you've come into the office of a busy newspaper to inform me of your genealogy?"

"Well, no," his caller hastily assured him, with a mechanical smile. "No—oh, no! Not at all! I—I have a story which——"

But Wainwright abruptly leaped from his chair and towered over the youth, who shuddered and cast a longing glance at the door.

"Oh, you have a story!" mimicked Luscious, in a high, falsetto voice. He then gazed upward at the ceiling. "He has a story!" he repeated, in a confidential tone to the plaster. "Why don't you tell it, then, eh?" he roared, wheeling on the astonished youth. "What do you want me to do—see if I can find it out in three guesses? Tell it! Tell it!"

"But you won't give me a chance, Mr. Wainwright," began the other, with an indignant inflection to his tremulous voice. "I tried——"

"I won't give him a chance!" interrupted Wainwright, addressing his desk incredulously. "You've been in here five minutes," he yelled, "and all you've released is the first paragraph of your biography! If you've got a single interesting fact hidden about you somewhere, let's have it or go!"

"I suppose I'd better begin at the beginning," faltered the youth, dropping into a chair and sitting stiffly on the edge.

"Oh, no!" snorted Wainwright. "Don't do that! Commence in the middle, or start at the end, and tell it backward—it makes it harder! Now, see here——"

But this time it was the other who interrupted determinedly, waving a silencing hand at Wainwright's flow of sarcasm.

"This story was told to me in strict confidence," he said impressively, "and so——"

"Wait!"

Wainwright drew himself up to his full height, a matter of six feet odd, and sternly inquired:

"You say this was told you in confidence?"

"Yes, sir!" nodded the youth eagerly. "Now——"

"Then what do you mean by violating that confidence and insinuating that I would be a party to it? What do you mean, eh?"

Fear and astonishment fought a dead heat on the startled youth's face. He crouched back in his chair until both tried vainly to press on through the wall paper and out into the great outdoors. He watched Wainwright with the fascination of a doomed bird regarding a snake—his eyes eloquently speaking of his future career, should a merciful Heaven grant him his life now. Luscious watched him with ecstatic joy, until, gorged, he grasped his victim by the shoulder and lifted him bodily from the chair.

"Young man," he roared, "this is an honorable newspaper, operated by gentlemen, and not thugs! We do not violate confidences here—we cherish and respect them! Now go—peddle your scandal elsewhere!"

Having delivered this arraignment, Luscious, still holding his pose of outraged honor, released the terrified youth and sat down at his desk.

Clarence R. Edmundson gasped—snatched frantically at his hat, and took his secret away from the Bentonville *Times* office at a speed that would make a startled deer seem stationary.

The instant the door slammed after him, Wainwright rushed to it, flung it open, and bellowed up the narrow stairway:

"Greer!"

There came an immediate clattering down the stairs—it was as though the clatterer had been on his mark and merely awaiting the word to start—and a determined-looking young man, attired in a shiny, black suit, bagging at the knees and other strategic points, pronounced tan shoes, a green eye

shade, and wearing his hair a trifle over the back of his collar, bounced into the room. His manner was so much in contrast with that of the previous visitor as to be marked. He advanced briskly, seizing a chair in his flight across the floor, and, having arrived at Wainwright's desk, he flipped the chair under him with a dexterous movement and sat down.

Jimmy Greer was to the Bentonville *Times* what gasoline is to an automobile, or food to a banquet. Besides staggering under the title of city editor, he was three-fourths of the staff, business and editorial. His official duties defied enumeration, and his weekly salary was eighteen dollars, which Wainwright paid him bitterly every Saturday night Jimmy could find him. But Wainwright knew that without Jimmy his beloved newspaper would soon become but a fond memory, and he would have no place to print his editorials on the growth of the Populist movement. So he enticed Jimmy to become as permanent as the mortgage on the press, by dangling the prospect of a raise in pay before him whenever heroic measures were needed. Jimmy, though highly incredulous, stayed on—he found a tang of adventure in the expectancy.

When Jimmy had settled himself comfortably beside Wainwright's desk, he plucked a stub of pencil from his vest pocket, pawed coolly around on the blotting pad for a moment, and, finally, his searching hand coming upon a pad of memorandum paper, he seized it and struck an attitude of attention.

"Shoot!" he said flippantly, poising the pencil.

Wainwright eyed him malevolently for an instant, and then rumbled:

"Young man, you'll carry your disrespect too far some day, and I'll fire you! I've warned you a great many times"—he raised his hand and snapped a finger—"some day——"

The gesture and digital snap that accompanied the unfinished threat might have meant anything, from sudden death to lingering torture.

Jimmy watched and smiled apologetically. He held no illusions about the noisy Luscious, and baiting him was the only pleasure he wrung from an eighteen-dollar-a-week life.

"I thought you wanted me to take a letter, boss," he explained cheerfully, pocketing the pencil.

"Well, I don't!" snorted Wainwright angrily. "When I get paralysis, I'll let you know. Here's what I want you for—you know everybody in this town, don't you?"

Jimmy contracted his brow doubtfully.

"Did you say know or owe, boss?" he inquired innocently.

"I said know!" yelled Wainwright, banging his fist on the desk. "And if you persist with that cheap humor of yours, I'll—I'll——"

"Boss," broke in Jimmy placatingly, "don't get excited. And don't be so harsh about my comedy. You can't expect Harry Lauder for eighteen dollars a week! As for knowing the inhabitants of our bustling village—well, those who have not made my acquaintance, have been sneaking around here in the dead of night, or something like that, and——"

"All right! All right!" interrupted Wainwright hastily. "Do you know any one named Edmundson?"

"Ha!" chuckled Jimmy. "Little shrimp, dresses like a movie hero, acts like a scared rabbit, and talks like a lady nurse. Lives on Reynolds Street, works in the gents' furnishing foundry, crazy to be a reporter—so is any one that is—goes——"

"Wait! Wait!" Wainwright threw up his hands. "You'll have *me* crazy with that infernal chatter in a minute! Can't you answer yes or no?"

"I can try it!" Jimmy volunteered.

Wainwright glared impotently.

"Here's what I want you to do," he said finally. "This Clarence Edmundson has stumbled on a story in some way, and it may be a good one—at any rate, I want to look it over and see. Go out and get hold of him and remove it from his system—get it all, and get it quick! Don't let him know I sent you under any consideration—you might say you overheard us talking about it in the office here. Do it any way you want, but don't mention my name. If it's an awful good story—something that will sell some papers—you get your raise."

Jimmy arose silently and started for the door. Halfway he paused, reflected a moment, and then turned to Wainwright.

"Was he in here to-day with that story?" he asked.

"He was," returned Wainwright. "He has little or no technique. He said he had heard it in confidence, and then wanted to tell it to me, then and there! As if I would think of encroaching on a sacred trust!"

"Only fawncy!" remarked Jimmy, with a grim chuckle. "When do you want this yarn, boss?"

"As soon as you can tear it from him," responded Wainwright. "Hurry up—he might force it on some one else."

"Right-o!" Jimmy came nearer, "You better let me have some expense money, boss," he murmured. "I may be compelled to buy Clarence a chocolate nut sundae, or some chewing gum, to make him garrulous."

"Don't you dare bribe any one while you're in my employ!" shouted the virtuous Luscious. "Here's fifty cents!"

Outside the office, Jimmy reached in some hidden recess back of the stairs, and found his greenish-hued derby. He slapped it upon his head at a

truculent angle, and gazed in at Wainwright's broad back.

"If this Clarence person *hasn't* got a story, Luscious," he breathed, "I'll give him one myself! And if I don't get the raise then, I'll dynamite the brewery and collect from the prohibitionists!"

It was, perhaps, three hours later that Jimmy Greer again stood in the lair of his employer, and this time waited patiently for Luscious to acknowledge his presence. His half dozen suggestive coughs going unnoticed, he cleared his throat noisily and spoke.

"I've got the story, boss!" he announced casually.

Wainwright calmly went on applying his autograph to a neat little pile of checks, and giving no outward sign that he was aware of Jimmy's existence on this troubled planet. He signed the last with a flourish, blotted it with a force that just missed driving it through the wood of the desk, and then swung around in his chair, scowling at Jimmy.

"Eh?" he ejaculated testily.

Thus encouraged, Jimmy advanced to his desk.

"I was just remarking that I've procured that story from Edmundson," he repeated.

"Well, what is it—a secret?" yelled Wainwright. "What did he have? You know how busy I am, and yet you stand there and mumble something about having a story! What is——"

"One moment!" interposed Jimmy, with dignity. "I never mumble. I have my faults, but that's not one of them. Besides, I'm shy a front tooth, and if I attempted to mumble, I'd cut my tongue! Do you want to hear the yarn?"

Catching the full force of Wainwright's exasperated glare, he went on hurriedly:

"Very well! Here it is in a nutshell:

In the first place, it's a ghost story, and——"

"A what?" exclaimed Luscious, half rising from his chair.

"A ghost story," continued the imperturbable Jimmy, "with a haunted house and all the trimmings! As soon as we print this yarn, all the New York papers will send their star men over here to solve the great Bentonville mystery, and this town will get a million dollars' worth of advertising. Of course, that won't do your real estate a bit of harm, and——"

"Go up and write it!" interrupted Wainwright abruptly, turning back to his desk with a dismissing wave of his hand. A sudden thought seemed to strike him, as Jimmy reached the door.

"Hold on!" he sang out. "Where is this haunted house?"

Jimmy smiled deliberately, and retraced his steps, until he stood in front of Luscious again.

"To be brutally frank with you, boss," he grinned cheerfully, "we haven't selected a place yet."

"What!" exclaimed Wainwright. "Do you mean to say this thing is a *fake*?"

Jimmy sighed and slumped down in a near-by chair.

"Boss," he said, "I guess you better let me tell you this yarn at that."

While Luscious bestowed on him a look of mingled ire and astonishment, Jimmy coolly explored his pockets for a cigarette, and, finding one, lit it and puffed enjoyably. He settled himself comfortably in the chair, and nodded pleasantly to a friend who, passing outside, glanced in the window.

"Let's see," he began pensively, unmindful of the snorting Wainwright. "Where were we? Oh, yes! Now, this fellow Edmundson, as I observed before, would rather work for the excitement on a newspaper, than be mayor of this town! He tells me he's tried all the conventional ways of get-

ting on the pay roll, such as asking for a job and so forth, with practically no success. Being a determined young man, despite his fatal weakness for chocolate nut sundaes, he has decided to risk his future on one cast of the die—that's his own expression, and you must admit it's classy, eh? However, he has staked all his chances on this plan!"

"What plan?" demanded Wainwright contemptuously.

"The ghost!" answered Jimmy promptly. "Clarence has a friend who used to be the Human Brass Band with a circus—I've heard him work, and brass band is right, believe me! Besides his many other talents, this accomplished youth can mew better than a cat, or make a noise like a wild ferret at the drop of a hat, see? You know, the old ventriloquist stuff! But he's especially good on the brass-band or full-orchestra effect. Why, he took to sneezing outside the post office one day, and everybody ran out in the street—they thought the G. A. R. post was stakin' themselves to a parade!"

"What's all this got to do——"

"Don't crowd me, boss," Jimmy shut off the interruption. "The Human Brass Band is willing to loan himself out to Clarence and myself in this way. We're going to hide him in an empty house somewhere, wind him up so he'll go off at midnight, or some such devilish hour, and there you are! The neighbors will do the rest!"

Jimmy paused triumphantly and lit a fresh cigarette.

"Is that all?" inquired Wainwright grimly.

"Oh, my, no!" answered Jimmy enthusiastically. "That's merely the entrée, so to speak! As I previously hinted, the New York papers will send their most expensive help over here, to show us how to handle a sure-enough mystery story. The big-town boys send back stories every day—I'll

see that it's kept hot enough for that!—and we get on page one. What's the result? They attract attention to our burg, and property values are—er—bound to boom!"

"I suppose if we'd feature the cemetery for a week, graveyards being generally supposed to be a ghost's hang-out, everybody would want to live *there*, eh?" sneered Luscious scornfully.

"You don't grasp the idea, boss," argued Jimmy patiently. "Here—let me explain. You take people that live right here in this town and are moving. Do you think they'll look for a home in the part of the town where our ghost is? Not much! They'll all move over to the other side of the railroad, where all *your* empty and unhaunted houses are! I got it all figured out. There's you taken care of—now for the paper. We have better stories on the haunted house than anybody else every day, because it's our ghost, see? Finally, when we've got 'em all worked up to a pitch—everybody laying awake all night tryin' to figure out the answer—we pull the big, exclusive exposé stuff! I'll write said exposé this afternoon, and it will read something like this: The alleged ghost is a fellow who was partial to a girl who died in the haunted house—he's been going there every night to commune with her spirit! How's that; pretty poor, eh? 'The Phantom Romance Exposed!' And I got pictures, too!"

"Where will you get the late young woman's picture?" asked Wainwright, after a reflective pause. He appeared impressed.

"Easy!" replied Jimmy, without hesitation. "Clarence has a girl out in Iowa, and she's going to help him put this over—if her photograph doesn't arrive in the morning's mail, we'll send her a night letter!"

Wainwright stared long and thoughtfully at Jimmy, drumming on the desk

with a lead pencil. Of a sudden, the pencil stopped its rapid tattoo.

"What about the police?" he shot out.

"I've got 'em both fixed," answered Jimmy proudly.

Wainwright threw up his hands with a gesture of mock despair.

"Get out of my office!" he boomed. "And—wait! When is this ghost hippodrome scheduled to begin?"

Jimmy considered for a moment.

"We figured to-morrow night would be about right," he answered, "but if——"

"Write a story about it now, and plant your human orchestra to-night," commanded Luscious, with sudden determination. "Have Haviland compose an editorial on psychic phenomena, or, if that's beyond him, lift a page from the 'Universal Educator,' and have it set in ten-point caps. Go over to Madame Lavelle's, or whatever that alleged fortune teller over the drug store calls herself, and get an interview with her on this thing from a medium's standpoint. Here! Wait a minute!"

He stopped abruptly, pawed around in a desk drawer, and finally brought to light a huge, impressively bound volume, covered with dust, and those yellow pages that flapped into view were uncut. Jimmy, glancing over Wainwright's shoulder, saw the following inscription in gold letters on the cover: "My Experiences in the Spirit World; by Madame du Horner."

"My wife acquired this with trading stamps five years ago," said Wainwright, banging the book down on the desk. "She needed it like I need a toothache! But—take it upstairs, pick out the hottest stuff, and head it, 'Similar Cases.'"

"Right-o!" responded Jimmy, and, armed with the volume, he went upstairs.

At the top of the stairway, he paused

and gazed down at the little office below.

"Luscious," he murmured, "you're terrible noisy, and you have your faults—but you sure do know how to handle a story. I've got to hand it to you."

Within two days after the Human Brass Band made his début as a phantom, the success of Jimmy's scheme was assured. The *Times* printed grave and learned theories as to the possible cause of the phenomenon, the town exuded mystery, and the "ghost," meeting such hearty appreciation of his efforts, haunted his lair on Hillsdale Street as few empty houses have been haunted before—adding new numbers to his weird repertory nightly. As Jimmy had forecasted, or guaranteed, rather, the metropolitan newspapers began to take notice, and sent over men of assured reputation as humorists to send back front-page stories on the Bentonville ghost. Daring youths who approached the haunted house, and photographed it for their sweethearts, were looked upon as fearless devils of a high order, and many reaped handsome profits selling the photos at the railroad station.

When the out-of-town newspaper men and a few unromantic citizens, scenting something more material than a spirit, would have valiantly taken up headquarters in the house, they were discouraged by the town trustees, who, intoxicated by the advertising their village was getting, denied admission to all and sundry. The Hillsdale Street haunted house was the first thing of moment the town had harbored since a candidate for sheriff had executed a campaign speech there, and they were taking no chances of having the ghost annoyed to the point where he would depart from their midst.

Then, abruptly, the *Times* began hinting daily that it had plumbed the depths of the mystery, leaping from

that to a bold announcement one afternoon that it would reveal and prove the secret within a week, or forfeit a thousand dollars to the G. A. R. post. This lashed the town's interest to a point where those with weak hearts refused to read the paper—yet the dare-devils of the county rallied, and copies of the *Times* sold like gunpowder would in the Balkans.

It was at this critical period that an automobile drew up outside the office of the Bentonville *Times*, and an elderly, very prosperous-looking man alighted. His brow was wrinkled with some great care, but his jaw was set determinedly, and, after a sweeping survey up and down the street, he strode hurriedly up the steps and into the building. In five minutes more, he was standing before the mighty Luscious, apparently suffering from pique, and his first utterance was to voice his indignation.

"I've been standing outside knocking at that door for five minutes, Mr. Wainwright!" he said testily.

Wainwright swung around in his chair, and appraised his visitor coolly. Seeing no familiar face, he frowned, tapped on the desk with his pencil, and cleared his throat for action.

"What are you—a spy?" he demanded.

The other seemed somewhat taken aback, having expected the groveling apology his two-carat scarfpin warranted.

"A spy?" he repeated indignantly. "What do you mean?"

"What do *you* mean," thundered Wainwright, "by standing outside *my* door for five minutes! Are you seeking evidence of some sort, or what? Come, no falsehoods now—I won't have this temple of truth desecrated!"

He waved his hand grandly around the office. The visitor eyed him in dignified, but steadily rising, wrath, and advanced closer to the desk.

"I came here to discuss business with you, Mr. Wainwright—not to be insulted!" he said, with a patent heroic effort to control his gorge. "I stood outside your door because you failed to answer my knock—my *repeated* knocks, I might say!"

Wainwright grunted and puffed spasmodically at his cigar, considering his caller in silence. Then he cocked one eye aggressively, and shot out:

"I don't need any editorial writers, books, ink, paper, pencils, desk appliances, vacuum cleaners, or typesetting machines! If that covers your line—good day!"

The man gasped indignantly.

"Now see here, Mr. Wainwright!" he spluttered, his face assuming a crimson hue. "I may as well inform you that I don't intend to stand here and be insulted in this manner. Here is my card, sir."

Wainwright glared at him and snatched the card from his hand, as though he had detected him in the act of stealing it.

"J. R. van Aylstyne. Real Estate. Flatiron Building, New York," he read aloud. "Well—what of it?" he finished belligerently, glancing up.

"I called to see you in the interest of a client of mine—in brief, the owner of the parcel on Hillsdale Street, now unfortunately known as the haunted house," Van Aylstyne answered calmly.

A faint gleam of interest kindled in Wainwright's eyes.

"Be seated," he said shortly; "and remember, I demand speed rather than rhetoric in this office."

Van Aylstyne regarded him bitterly—but continued:

"I have been told that you are the largest holder of realty in the town," he began, "and that you are not opposed to increasing your holdings when a desirable—or, rather, when a bargain is offered. Am I right?"

Wainwright nodded impatiently,

flicking the ash from his cigar and assuming the air of a harassed business Napoleon being pestered by a subordinate.

"Get to the point, get to the point!" he commanded irritably. "My time is valuable——"

"Very well, sir," interrupted Van Aylstyne hastily, "my client wishes to dispose of the property in question, because of this unfortunate ghost affair, and I am authorized to offer you a truly remarkable bargain."

"Does your client want to give the house away?" inquired Wainwright sharply.

"Well, not quite that, Mr. Wainwright, but——"

"Then it's no bargain!" exclaimed Wainwright, with a disdainful snap of his fingers. "And don't go around misrepresenting it as such any more. As long as that ghost keeps hanging around there, nobody in this town will rent it. What good is a cake that you can't eat? No good! How much do you want for the house?"

"Only seven thousand," answered the other promptly.

Wainwright's cigar fell out of his hand on the rug, and he stamped on it hastily. He whirled on Van Aylstyne, hands on his hips, and towered over him.

"Do I look like a fool?" he demanded harshly. "Do I, eh?"

Van Aylstyne regarded him speculatively for an instant, and then answered haltingly, as though in some doubt:

"Why—er—no."

"Then what do you mean by intimating that I am one, eh? Do you know what I could do in this town with seven thousand dollars? I could get elected mayor, have the burg named after me, start two banks, and have enough change left to open a faro parlor in the county courthouse! Seven

thousand dollars!" he laughed harshly. "If I was running a comic weekly, I'd let you in it with that line!"

Van Aylstyne looked at him unmoved—a faint, mechanical smile played over his lips.

"Just how much are you prepared to give for the property, Mr. Wainwright?" he inquired suavely.

Now, it so happened that Luscious had cast longing eyes on the Hillsdale Street section of Bentonville for some time past, and had tried many times to extend his holdings there—Hillsdale Street was the Fifth Avenue of Bentonville, and if there was one word in the English language that he loved, it was "exclusive." But the residents of that thoroughfare thwarted Wainwright's ambition by banding together and holding on to their lots—they respected him as an institution of the town, but they absolutely refused to receive his ninety lung-power, six-cylinder voice in their midst. So Luscious saw now opportunity battering at his door. He surveyed Van Aylstyne shrewdly over his glasses.

"I'll give you three thousand dollars for the house the way it stands, ghost and all!" he exclaimed suddenly. "That's every nickel——"

There came a sudden, crashing blow against the door—so loud, unexpected, and businesslike, that it startled even the terrible Luscious into silence for an instant, and sent Van Aylstyne leaping up from his chair, in alarm. The thumping was repeated heartily, and the door seemed to sag on its hinges.

Wainwright laid hold of a heavy paper weight, and, casting a look at his visitor of such malignant significance that the latter shuddered, roared:

"Come in!"

Almost at the word, the door burst open, and what at first glance appeared to be an uncanny, lifelike mechanical toy, which, weighted at the bottom with lead, and known as a "roly-poly,"

revolves on its base, and fascinates the children, entered the room. But as the door banged back viciously after him, one saw it was a diminutive human, red-faced, disheveled, and with little, fat legs supporting a body of the general outline of an apple. His chubby little arms were folded across his breast, and he glared about him angrily.

"Which one of you guys is Wainwright, heh?" he demanded belligerently. His voice was high and piping—like that of a querulous child.

Luscious dropped the paper weight contemptuously on his desk, and turned grimly.

"I am!" he boomed. "And how dare you come into my office and address me in this manner, you—you gnat!"

"Can that stuff!" shouted the little man, striding up to Wainwright unflinchingly. "Lay off it right a-way! I want to speak to you private, and quick! Do you make me?"

"Well, you impudent pup!" thundered Wainwright, seemingly on the verge of apoplexy. "You'll wait until I am ready to see you! I——"

"Nix on that impudent-pup stuff!" interposed the little fellow, in a rage. "You're bigger'n me, but if you make any more of them cracks about me, I'll bounce somethin' offen your ear!"

He darted back a step and looked eagerly around the office, as if in search for a missile of those propensities. Van Aylstyne backed away in fear—Wainwright seemed speechless with anger.

"What do you want?" he yelled finally.

"Dough!" shrieked the newcomer. "Good, old-fashioned dough!"

He jumped around before Luscious, as though the question had driven him into a fresh frenzy.

"A lunatic!" whispered Wainwright to Van Aylstyne, as the latter edged for the door.

"The bakery is around the corner,

my good man," he said soothingly; "right around the corner."

He advanced and laid his hand on the little fellow's arm—but the other hopped away with a dexterous movement, and sought cover behind a chair.

"Don't touch me, you big stiff!" he screamed. His eye caught a potted plant standing on top of Wainwright's desk, and, scurrying around the chair, he snatched up the plant, wrenched the flower out in a twinkling, and poised the pot over his head. "Keep some room between us, friend," he warned, "or I'll let you have it! That bakery stuff of yours is about as funny to me as pneumonia! You know what I want—I want some dough, and I'm gonna get it!"

"Hopelessly insane!" declared Wainwright, over his shoulder to Van Aylstyne, and received a frightened nod in reply. Luscious started for the telephone, but the seeker of dough scented a flank movement, and poised the pot threateningly.

"Perhaps he means bread," suggested Van Aylstyne, in a loud aside. "He may be starving!"

The little man whirled on him, and the real-estate man, ignorant of the chair in back of him, fell over it.

"Oh, you're another kiddie, too, eh?" yelled the object of his concern. "He means bread, eh?" He laughed demoniacally. "Ha! Ha! That's great—go to the head of the class!" His manner changed suddenly, and he whirled back to Wainwright. "He means *business*!" he screeched. "That's what he means!"

He stood in front of Luscious, toying significantly with the flowerpot.

"Do you know who I am?" he demanded.

"Certainly," answered Wainwright, winking ponderously at Van Aylstyne. "Of course we do—you're Napoleon! I'll phone for the Duke of Wellington and we'll all——"

"Hey!" shouted the little fellow.

"What are you guys—nutty? What do you mean Napoleon? Where do you get that stuff?" An expression of cunning suddenly replaced the look of amazement on his features. "Oh, I got it!" he sneered. "You're tryin' to make me think you're a couple of nuts, so I'll get leary and beat it, eh? Well, you don't put nothin' like that over on me! I'm goin' to get a piece of money before I leave this joint, or I'll wreck it—do you get that?"

"He wants *money* now!" whispered Van Aylstyne, with the air of one imparting a secret. "Perhaps you had better call——"

"*Now!*" shrilled the invader. "I wanted it when I come in here! Don't you guys understand English? I want money, kale, dough, mazuma, or whatever you guys call it! I need it, I got to have it, and I'm gonna get it, or good-by office!"

He hefted the flowerpot tentatively, and both Luscious and the real-estate man dodged with such perfect harmony that one would have thought they had rehearsed the movement for weeks.

"Who are you?" queried Wainwright, from the back of his desk.

"*I'm the ghost!*" came the instant response.

"The what?" chorused the other two.

"The ghost!" repeated the little fellow. He inflated his chest proudly. "I'm Delirio, the Human Brass Band."

In the ensuing silence, a graveyard would have appeared noisy. Wainwright and Van Aylstyne exchanged glances; and there was a strange look in the real-estate man's eyes, as he strode quickly to the side of the self-confessed phantom, his fear magically vanished.

"Would you repeat that statement, please?" he asked eagerly.

"Sure!" agreed Delirio. "All day long! I ain't ashamed of it. I been all over the country, and in Europe, too!"

Everywhere I go, they feature me! See, lookit——”

He paused and hopped swiftly to the center of the room, striking a pose and thrusting a hand between the buttons of his coat. Van Aylstyne watched interestedly—Wainwright as though fascinated.

“A correct imatashun of Susie’s Band!” announced Delirio loudly. He suddenly contorted his little face, and from the aperture where his mouth had been came this preliminary—the interjections being his own:

“Zing! Bam! Zin! Brrrrh! Boo, boom ta da latta! Boom ta da latta! Pretty rotten, eh? Da tatta, de te tum, da tatta! That’s goin’ a few, eh? Deedle te di! Zing, bam boom——”

There was not the semblance of a smile on his features—he was as serious and dignified as any artist at a salon recital. His diminutive chest was thrust out, until it appeared about to burst from his coat, and it seemed incredible that such a volume of sound could issue from any human—much less from one the size of this odd creature. Wainwright covered his ears, and, with a baffled groan, sank into his chair—but Van Aylstyne, doubled up with mirth, waved weakly for Delirio to continue. Every musical instrument known to man or beast was given a correct “imatashun” by Delirio during the overture he shot from his system. He seemed more partial to the bass drum than anything else, and his resounding “Boom, boom!” seemed to shake the building. At length he stopped, with a grand, crashing flourish, that rattled the windowpanes, and, exhausted, he leaned weakly against the wall.

“I guess that’s poor, or somethin’ like that, eh?” he panted faintly.

Wainwright arose and advanced threateningly, but Van Aylstyne headed him off, wiping his streaming eyes and turning to Delirio.

“Magnificent!” he exclaimed, wringing the little fellow’s hand. “Splendid!”

“You said it!” agreed the modest human orchestra. “Them foreign guys went nutty over me.”

“What does this man owe you?” asked Van Aylstyne, indicating Wainwright with a contemptuous gesture.

Instantly, Delirio forgot his art, and became the belligerent again. Ere Luscious could interpose, he cried:

“He owes me for bein’ a ghost up at that house! This guy sends a man around to con me into takin’ that job, see? Well, the hired man’s stuff is good, and I fall for it—he was goin’ to slip me twenty at the end of each week. I go down to the house every night, and make a noise like a ghost. I took an interest in the job, where I might ‘a’ laid down! But no, I’m a regular fellow—I pull a lot of extry stuff, like dyin’ man’s groans and rattlin’ chains, see? And it goes big!” Here he shrugged his shoulders, as though the remark was superfluous. “You know my stuff, you heard me work just now! Well, I give him all I got. I got to stall around in a cold cellar, dodging rats and wise guys and everything else! I do it for two weeks, and I don’t get a nickel—instead of that, this guy’s hired man comes down and stalls me off every day. Last night he meets me in the cellar and wants to borreh a buck from *me*! Do you get that? He wants *me* to slip *him*! That was all I could take, and——”

“One moment!” interrupted Van Aylstyne, turning to the petrified Wainwright. “What have you got to say to this remarkable story, Mr. Wainwright?” he asked frigidly.

“It’s an infernal lie!” roared Luscious, coming out of his trance. “I never saw the little fiend before.”

“I got a witness!” shrieked Delirio, hopping around him. “I ain’t no fiend, either—don’t start makin’ no cracks about me again!” He menaced Wain-

wright with the flowerpot, until the latter retreated. "My friend, Clarence Edmundson, heard this guy you sent around to me frame the ghost thing up!"

Van Aylstyne turned to Wainwright with a glint of triumph in his eye.

"Of course, Mr. Wainwright," he said coldly, "I may as well inform you that the sale of the property is off. Also, I will begin legal action against you—at once—for the damage you have done my client's house. You have jeopardized its value by this amazing conspiracy, and we will sue immediately."

"Pour it into him!" yelled Delirio admiringly. "Let him have it!" He danced around the unhappy Luscious in a frenzy of joy. "I'm goin' to sue him myself—we'll all sue him!"

Wainwright was nothing if not a quick thinker—and out in Oklahoma, the land of his birth, he was known as a good loser. He turned to Van Aylstyne.

"You win!" he said, with a mirthless smile. "I'll give you or your client five hundred dollars cash right now for any damage this—this"—he choked, but continued with an effort—"has done your property."

He glared at Delirio with the regard that a caged lion observes the approach of its midday meal. Delirio, undaunted, contorted his face, and stuck his tongue out impudently.

Van Aylstyne reached for his hat and gloves.

"I will inform my client of your offer," he said to Wainwright, "and you will hear from me shortly—good day, sir!"

There was ominous portent in his tones. He walked over to Delirio and offered the latter his hand.

"Young man," he said, "you are a wonder! I——"

"Wanna hear the 'Poet and Peasant'?" interrupted Delirio, with the air

of one about to grant an extraordinary boon. "See—lookit! Da ta, daddle te-te——"

"I would rather hear that than anything I can think of," the real-estate man assured him hastily, "but I have an important engagement. Some time I will have you come up to my house and entertain us!"

"All right, fine!" said Delirio. "Cost you fifty bucks!"

As Van Aylstyne passed through the door, he bumped against some one coming in. It was Jimmy.

"Well, boss," began the ghost planter breezily, "I guess we had better pull the great exposé now, and——" He saw Delirio, paled, and sank helplessly into a chair. "Good night!" he ejaculated. "That was what I heard, eh?" He turned savagely on the Human Brass Band. "What do you mean by walking around in the daytime—do you want somebody to see you and queer the whole thing?"

"Do you get that?" shrieked Delirio. "This guy thinks I'm a bat! Don't go out in the daytime, eh? Why, you——"

But Wainwright was fumbling frantically in his desk, and he suddenly straightened up, in his hands a huge cowhide whip, such as plainsmen use.

"Now, by the Eternal!" he bellowed. "I'll make real ghosts out of both of you!"

The record for the running broad jump was shattered twice in the next moment. Jimmy set a new one, and the Human Brass Band broke that, as they went through the door. Halfway down the street, Jimmy collided with some one, turned quickly, and grabbed him. It was Clarence Edmundson, originator of the Bentonville Mystery.

"Where are you going in such a hurry?" exclaimed Clarence. "My gracious, you nearly bowled me over!"

Jimmy regarded him lovingly.

"Excuse me!" he panted. "I was

looking for you. Wainwright wants you right away. There's probably a job waiting for you there now, and——"

"Oh, lovely!" ejaculated Clarence. "I shall hurry right up!"

"Do that," urged Jimmy, casting fearsome glances over his shoulder. "I'll be back in a minute. I want to get some chocolate fudge at the drug store!"

And he was off.

At what the movies refer to as "a late hour that night," Jimmy staggered up to the café at the railroad station to rest his weary bones. He had traversed

all of Bentonville at a high rate of speed in an effort to throw the furious Luscious off his track. He was tired, exhausted, and needed sustenance, and he licked his dry lips at the thought of the huge beaker of——

As his hand touched the door, he heard a familiar voice.

"And the other guy is runnin' yet!" it was saying. "Wanna hear Susie's Band? Lookit! Boom, ta ra ra! Boom ta——"

With a groan that came from somewhere under his feet, Jimmy staggered on into the night.

HOSPITALITY THAT WAS EMPHASIZED.

THERE is in New York to-day a man who can match his experiences with any of those that have been endured of late by Americans trying to escape into the United States from Mexicans and Yaqui Indians. His name is John Hays Hammond, and he is now a multimillionaire, who, with offices in New York, carries on his daily work far from the disorders on the Mexican border.

When he was a young man, however, unforeseen catastrophes of a serious nature brought things to such a conclusion that Hammond, who was then a mining engineer in Mexico, found it necessary to abandon his mines, to hitch two mules to a wagon, and to haul as much ore as he could carry across the border into this country. He reached the border at night, and, in attempting to ford a stream, found the water so high that he had to shout for help, his shouting being unusually loud, because he did not know that anybody lived in the neighborhood.

Pretty soon two men appeared on the south bank of the stream, and, by waving lanterns and shouting directions, enabled Hammond to get his team and its load back to the Mexican shore. They then took Hammond to their cottage, a rudely built affair, and the family, consisting of a father and three grown sons, entertained him royally.

"Now," said the father, next morning after breakfast, "we are going to show you something about shooting."

Taking a rifle, the old man put three bullets through a twenty-five-cent piece at a distance of one hundred yards. Followed a carnival of expert shooting.

Hammond thanked them for their hospitality and for the exhibition of marksmanship. When he arrived safely in an Arizona town and told his story, one of the natives said:

"You're the only man who ever got past that gang. They are notorious bandits, and have been holding up every American who tried to bring ore across the border."

"I suppose," commented Hammond, "they let me off because I looked so poor."

He did—in those days.

The Reata

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

OLD Fernando slowly plaited close the long, strong rawhide strands;
Inch by inch the stout reata grew beneath his horny hands
As he sang a Spanish love song—sang until the work was done,
Knotted in the woven honda, when the shadow of his son,
Young Miguel, crossed to the patio, paused, and stood beside his sire,
And the new, smooth-coiled reata filled his heart with keen desire.

Old Fernando took the olla from the shadowy pepper tree,
Drank the fresh, cool water slowly, sighed, and most contentedly
Rolled a cigarette and smoked it—blew a ring within a ring,
Said: "You like the new reata? It is yours if you will sing
That old song your madre taught you; song and singer years ago
Silent. . . ." Then Miguel he sang the old song, clear and low:

*"Quicker am I than the flash of wings!
Stronger am I than steel!
Luck to the hand that my fleet coil flings,
Luck to the heart as my master sings,
Coiling me reel on reel.*

*"What of the herd were it not for me,
The reata lithe and light?
What of the horses that break and flee
To the hills in the starry night?*

*"Swift they may flee, but far swifter I
Leap to the running steer,
Or loop a foot as the ponies fly,
When ye may not come as near.*

*"I the reata, fold on fold,
Coiled and uncoiled again;
Swift as the serpent to strike and hold
In the brunt of the shock and strain.*

*"Yea, you may jingle your bright bell spur,
And your conchas like stars may shine,
As you proudly ride past the eyes of her,
But the soul of it all is mine;*

*"For I earn ye the gold; with the same ye buy
Saddle, serape, spur,
Sombrero, and steed, but the king am I,
As ye ride past the eyes of her."*

Old Fernando Ruiz wove it, drawing close the rawhide strands;
Inch by inch the stout reata grew beneath his horny hands;
With a song Miguel had won it; with a song he rode away.
Old Fernando sat adreaming, empty-handed, bent and gray.

The Black Flamingo

By Elmer Brown Mason

Author of "The Golden Anaconda," "The Dancing Mulatto," Etc.

In which Wandering Smith takes a bird man into the heart of the Everglades in search of a black flamingo and comes upon a mystery that smacks of ante-bellum days

THERE was a heap of mail waiting for me at Père Guerrin's café when I got back from the snake-collecting trip I had taken into Colombia with McKee, the Scotchman. Letters are much more exciting to me than poker. You see, you *may* draw anything in them, and from anywhere, while even in the greatest American game you have only fifty-two cards—if you are honest—from which to fill your hand. The second one I opened gave me a bat right between the eyes. Inside was an engraved card:

Mrs. Alfrieda de Mille

and

Doctor A. Delmar Jumpkins

announce their marriage on Friday, May the twenty-first, at high noon.

Church of the Resurrection, New York City.

Doctor A. Delmar Jumpkins was no other than Old Bug, a special friend of mine, and he was sixty if a day! All the old fools weren't dead yet, I decided. And who in the dickens was Alfrieda?

The next letter in the pile was from Old Bug himself, and it kind of warmed my heart to think he had remembered me even in the midst of his passion.

MY DEAR WANDERING: Among the first of my friends I desire to advise you of my approaching matrimonial alliance with a most estimable and attractive woman. The cards will doubtless reach you before, at the same time, or shortly after the receipt of this letter. It would give me the greatest pleasure

if you could come to New York on the twenty-first of May, and be present at the ceremony.

I am in a state of extreme felicity, and could, were there time and space, expatiate at great length on the charm and many estimable qualities of the future Mrs. Jumpkins. I have, however, a matter of real importance to communicate to you.

I am sure you will share my delight when you read that, in looking over some of the material we collected together, under the bark of a piece of cypress I came upon a new species of *Ips*; indeed, I am not sure that I shall not claim for it a new genus! It approaches, in some respects, the large *Ips calligraphus*, but differs in being golden yellow instead of light chestnut, and in that its wing covers have twelve regular indentations on the margins instead of the five or six coarse teeth of the later species.

Herewith the technical description: . . .

(There was a whole page of it.)

I am gratified beyond words at the find, and know you will share my pleasure. It does, indeed, mark an epoch in my life, since it has been taken for granted that the genus *Ips* had been thoroughly covered.

I look forward with the greatest pleasure to showing you this new and rare beetle, and hope this letter will catch you *ad interim* your frequent trips. Yours sincerely,

A. DELMAR JUMPKINS.

Curator of Entomology,
Museum of Natural History.

Of course there was only one thing to do. I never desert a pal in trouble, and, besides, I was curious to see the beetle and Alfrieda. The date of the wedding was such that I had to catch next morning's train, so I packed a suit case, got the père to fill my flask, and

went out to buy myself suitable clothes and Old Bug a wedding present.

The trip to New York was uneventful, and a taxi landed me at the Museum of Natural History, where Old Bug seemed a heap tickled to see me. We looked at the new *Ips*, which I admired as was expected of me, and then went over the museum together. Honest, I envy people in New York having such a place to go. There is everything there, and then some more. Days wouldn't have been enough for me to thoroughly examine its treasures. And then I had an especial interest because bird, beast, insect, and reptile I had had a share in taking were on exhibition—it was just like meeting a boyhood chum in some bar.

Old Bug turned me over, when we reached the bird-habitat groups, to a young, good-looking cuss with gray hair and the most enormous voice I have ever listened to—sounded like the boom of a great bittern. He was introduced as "Professor de Mille, my best man," and I figured him out as Alfrieda's brother. Together we wandered from bird group to bird group until the beautiful flamingo nesting collection was reached, and there we stuck while he told me how he had been with Chapman and helped to secure these specimens, the whole museum echoing to his voice.

"They breed only in the Bahamas now," he continued.

"They breed in the Everglades today; I have seen them," I interrupted, "and a jet-black one among them."

"What!" he roared.

I repeated my statement.

"Couldn't be a black flamingo," he flatly contradicted me; "it's unheard of!"

One thing led to another, and, before I realized it, we were quarreling like two entomologists. Honest, I thought of the wedding just in time, or I'd have biffed him and then the best man

would have had to officiate from a litter.

There is only one way, short of a fight, to stop an argument when neither side will give in. I owe this valuable piece of knowledge to Père Guerrin, and I put it to use.

"Let's have a drink," I broke in on his seventeenth reason why I hadn't seen the black flamingo, which I *had* seen.

For a moment, he looked puzzled, and then grinned.

"I'd forgotten you were Wandering Smith, for the time being," he boomed. "I seldom indulge, but this—er—the wedding——"

"We'll drown our grief," I suggested, and we did, under several layers of wetness. Also I wondered, not without a certain amount of respect, how any human being could drink five cups of black coffee one-quarter laced with brandy at that time in the morning.

The wedding went off fine, and Alfrieda was a darling, fat as you make 'em, but a very great lady just the same. Not the kind that's great just because she has clothes and money, but that's born so. You'd take off your hat to her instinctively even were she serving drinks behind a bar. She was plainly very much stuck on Old Bug, and I was content to leave him in her hands. Perhaps she might even cure him of his pet vice of swilling down boiling water with every meal.

I'm so sentimental that it's all I can do to keep from crying at weddings, and I was glad when this one was over. Afterward, we had a breakfast at the bride's home, and, believe me, it was some feed! Every kind of a scientist you ever heard of was present, herded together by groups, the entomologists fighting one another like wild cats in one corner, the piscatorialists swapping fish stories in another, and the bird, beast, archæology, and all

the other ologies segregated each according to his kind.

I found myself with the ornithologists, De Mille, the best man, booming away on my right, and an authority on humming birds smoking countless cigarettes on my left. It was a wet feast, and, the occasion being an unusual one, I lapped up everything that was put before me.

De Mille roared out my story of the black flamingo, and it sure caught every one's attention. They made me tell how I had managed to lose myself in the Everglades, how I had found the birds nesting, and how, while I was being guided out by a Seminole Indian, I had seen the black flamingo.

During all this talking, either seventeen or forty-six more drinks came my way. I remember a heated argument with the mammoth-voiced man, a taxi; and then I woke up, the next morning, in my hotel, with my new silk hat under my head by way of pillow.

Hardly had I put down the second pitcher of ice water when the telephone bell rang, and De Mille shattered my eardrums with a request to be allowed to come up.

Dog-goned if I remember it, but it seems I had agreed to take him into the Everglades to study birds, and especially to try and get hold of that black flamingo.

Of course there was no backing out then—and I had intended to do the social act at two prize fights in New Orleans, just had to forget 'em—so we took the train that same night for Fort Lauderdale, on the edge of the Everglades.

I was mighty doubtful about that trip. You see, the mere fact you have once been a certain place in the Everglades doesn't mean by a whole lot that you can go there again. The whole country is nothing more than an eight-thousand-square-mile shallow lake of

fresh water that seeps up through limestone, and is overgrown with the most vicious five to ten-foot saw grass that you can possibly imagine. There are islands of marvelous fertility lost in this grassy wilderness, but only to be reached by nearly blind channels that the Seminole Indians alone know. And you can't get a Seminole for love or money to guide you into the Everglades, though they'll lead you out quick enough when you get lost there.

Nevertheless, I had a general idea of the direction in which I wanted to go. A flat-bottomed, twenty-foot scow, provisioned for two months, was hired, and we set out up New River.

For a day, we followed a more or less straight channel in a generally western direction, and then turned off boldly into a slight opening between the grass stems that seemed to lead southeast with the surface flow. At first it went in the right direction, then turned, stopped, and we struck a cross current and thick barrier of ten-foot grass. Pushing into this, we found another open channel; and by night, as completely lost as two people ever were, we tied to a small, very wet island where grew a single tall, wild rubber tree.

To tell the truth, I was completely discouraged and ready to look for a way out as quickly as possible. Not so Noisy De Mille! He had gone quite mad over the teeming bird life all around him; olive-brown and white limpkins, Louisiana herons, little blue herons, white ibises, snake-necked water turkeys, peach-blossom-shaded spoonbills, and a hundred others. Also it seemed to be the mating season for the majority of these birds, floating grass and mangrove bush holding many a nest with its treasure of quaintly marked, delicately beautiful eggs. The crown to the ornithologist's happiness came, however, when, with a metallic honking that sounded like a dozen brazen horns, seven flamingos drew a

scarlet streak across the sky, flying toward the setting sun.

"We'll follow them if we have to grow wings to do it," De Mille roared. "They are in their mating plumage, Wandering, in their mating plumage! Do you realize that they may be nesting here in Florida?"

What could you do with a nut like that? All scientists are crazy, anyway. I contented myself with killing seven moccasins that showed a tendency to roost in the boat, and went to sleep, lulled by the crying of the limpkins and the henlike notes of the Florida gallinule.

Don't know whether it was the rain or the roaring of the bull alligators that woke me, but I opened my eyes to look straight up into a dead-white human face not a foot from mine. For a moment, I thought I was still dreaming, and then the face popped out of sight like a diving loon. On my feet, I jerked my automatic from under my arm and snapped on the electric torch. It was darker than pitch in the drizzle, but I saw, and it was no fancy, the tall grass in the water waving as though something had just pushed through, and there was a peculiar smell in the air. A smell—well, a perfume—darn me if it wasn't cologne!

Mystified and rather frightened, I sat down in the stern of the boat; and then, from not a hundred yards away, came a shrill "Co-he-e-e!" to be answered by another "Co-he-e-e, co-he-e-e!" from behind the island.

Noisy woke and sat up.

"Don't speak!" I whispered. "There is something going on I don't understand. Just get out your gun."

For a moment nothing happened; and then, from every side, came a perfect chorus of "Co-he-e-es!" Something whistled through the air and fell into the boat, and—silence, save for the patter of the rain.

An hour we waited, neither of us say-

ing a word, till finally—and I nearly jumped out of the boat at what he meant for a whisper—De Mille spoke:

"Your friends seem to have gone."

"They knew you were going to coo at them and went away not to be deafened," I answered crossly. "I don't like this at all. Were they Seminoles, I wouldn't mind, because Seminoles never hurt a white man; but those 'Co-he-e-es' never came from an Indian's throat; sounded more like niggers. The Everglades are a hiding place for every escaped convict and bad black man in Florida. I'm not even sure they were niggers, because I saw——" But there I stopped. I was ashamed to mention the white face that had peered at me over the gunwale; felt I must have been dreaming.

"Let's see what came on board," I suggested, to change the subject. "Be careful, though. Perhaps moccasins fly in this mad place."

I snapped on the electric torch and swept its radiance over the boat. On the middle seat quivered an arrow feathered with the brilliant plumage of a flamingo, its point sunk deep in the wood.

We stared at this strange object for a moment, and then De Mille plucked it out.

It was about a yard long, feather and oyster-shell point bound on with deer sinew; and halfway up the shaft was rolled a slip of paper on which was written, in a small, beautiful script:

We mean you no harm, but you had better follow the Indian who will come to you in the morning. Though we mean you no harm, I cannot answer for my slaves.

"Co-he-e-e!" came from the distance, and I promptly pressed the button, shutting off the light.

We spoke no more that night, neither did we sleep.

The rain ceased. Morning came at last, and glad indeed were we to see it. The dry, yellow grass changed to a

sea of molten gold, the clear brown water to liquid amber. Bird after bird awoke, first to sleepy twitterings, then to full-throated song. Just as the sun rose, the seven clanging flamingos trailed scarlet across the sky, flying out of the west.

Incredulous of the night's happenings in the brilliant morning light, De Mille and I turned with the same movement toward the middle seat of the boat. The flamingo-feathered arrow was still there, a large moccasin comfortably coiled beside it.

We killed the snake and settled down to talk over the situation while the tea-kettle came to a boil over its spirit lamp. I was all for devoting our energies exclusively to finding a way out. My companion argued, on the other hand, that being lost didn't matter in the slightest. Hadn't we plenty of provisions and the best of drinking water all around us? Why not seize this opportunity of a lifetime to study the birds, and, above all, to run down the seven flamingoes? He left the final decision to me, however, and was far too much of a gentleman to mention that no black flamingo had been flying with its pink kinsfolk. I simply don't know how I should have decided were it not for what followed.

So silently that I could hardly believe my eyes, the grass stems parted and a yellow canoe slid over the amber water toward us, guided by a Seminole Indian.

"Come show you way out. Long, long way," the paddler remarked laconically.

"Thanking you very much for your kindly interest in our welfare," I said sarcastically, "but we are not going out."

"You die," came the indifferent answer, and the yellow canoe whirled about to disappear in the saw grass.

We spent the day collecting nests and eggs and taking photographs. The

birds were so tame that we could snap a brooding mother, and then afterward the very eggs or young which she had covered. And many of the eggs were certainly very lovely. There were full nests of white ones, spotted and speckled with rufous brown that the hen gallinule left with an explosive *chuck*, pale limpkin eggs blotched and stained with light cinnamon brown, eggs green, eggs mottled with pink; and we even found, on a mangrove branch above the water, the tiny, lichen-decked nest of a ruby-throated humming bird with its two infinitesimal white eggs, iridescent twin pearls.

De Mille simply wallowed in happiness, and I must say I was little less interested than he. During our collecting, we tried to keep a general westerly direction, but tempting vistas through the high grass continually lured us from our course, until, at nightfall, we found ourselves in a ten-yard-wide pond among broad water-lily bonnets. The pond was not over a foot or two in depth, and, making the best of the situation, we anchored in the middle.

The great marsh went to bed with cluckings, twitterings, and sleepy ends of song; flamingos sounded their horns for a brief moment above our heads, and the darkness came.

There were no mosquitoes—indeed, mosquitoes are rare within the Everglades—it was warm, and the little circle of light from our lantern really made a very cozy kind of shut-off place from the rest of the world. Supper eaten, and pipes drawing, we stretched comfortably in the bottom of the scow.

"Don't blame Ponce de Leon for expecting a fountain of youth in this climate," lazily remarked De Mille; "it breeds dreams. Before last night's concert began, I had a vision of an exquisite child face floating above me, and actually seemed to feel a kiss, soft as mist, upon my lips."

"Barring the kiss"—my face ducked

—“I had the same pipe dream,” I answered, sitting up. “But I went you one better. My girl used cologne.”

Noisy sat up, too.

“That’s a little more than odd. Now I think of it, my dream lady seemed addicted to perfume. I put it down to the magnolia blossoms this morning. Do you suppose a mermaid has been fascinated by our unquestionable charms, Wandering, and is following us around?”

“Showering the boat with cologne and flamingo-feathered arrows, while her pet alligators shouted ‘Co-he-e-e!’ in the distance,” I added to his sentence. “I tell you, Noisy, there is something happening that I don’t understand, and I do *not* like it. If we have the same kind of a concert to-night, I’m going to sprinkle the Everglades with a few steel-capped bullets.”

It didn’t rain that evening. The stars came out; the moon rose, flooding the golden marsh with silver, and it was very light. Even the birds seemed half awake, twittering softly now and then, as though turning over in their sleep. Stretched at full length, looking up at the stars, for a long time we listened to these gentle noises; then we, too, slept.

I seemed to be in a storm. The ocean splashed all around me, and then a wet mass of water came down on my face. My eyes open, I realized that the boat had drifted against the tall grass, and heard De Mille sputter: “I’m half drowned!”

“An alligator slapped the water with its tail when it saw——” The words froze on my lips. Above the reed tops rose a fearsome thing, a white, shivering shape with large, fiery eyes glowering down on us.

“Bang-spat-spat-spat!” went my automatic. “Co-he-e-e, co-he-e-e, co-he-e-e!” echoed from every side.

“Gimme that pump shotgun,” I yelled to Noisy, swung it around by

the barrel he tendered me, and turned it loose toward the flapping apparition before the stock was well against my shoulder.

There was a scream, unmistakably feminine, the white horror disappeared, and our boat rocked gently from the recoil of the gun.

“By the great horn spoon, the place is bewitched!” cried De Mille, and his voice was several octaves above its normal pitch.

“Bewitched or we have both got ’em,” I ejaculated furiously. “What does it all mean?”

The anchor rope had been cut clean in two, I found, when I went up to the bow, and I navigated our boat back into the middle of the lily bonnets, and tied it to push poles sunk deep in the mud. The circle of high grass was unbroken as I swept the electric torch around it; even the broad lily pads seemed to have been undisturbed.

“Load every gun on board, Noisy!” I ordered. “We’ll give your mermaid and her friends a warm reception if they come back. You might tell her so in that gentle voice of yours.”

“Come and get shot!” De Mille promptly roared. “We’re going to fire at anything we hear or see.”

“Co-he-e-e,” floated mockingly back to us over the reeds.

In the morning, we hadn’t much to say to one another. What was there to say, anyway? There was nothing to tie to, just mystery. People don’t go into the Everglades to play practical jokes. Besides, there aren’t any white people in the Everglades, and no one could possibly conceive of an Indian cutting up such foolish didos. And yet, just beyond the pond, we found something that rightly belonged in a boys’ boarding school. It was a sheet on a long pole, two big holes cut in it for eyes, and simply peppered with my shot!

That day was much like the previous one, save that we were both distinctly nervous, prone at times to keep silent, just listening. About noon, as we were skirting an unusually high and thick wall of grass, along which ran a narrow lane of shallow water, a consciousness that had been growing on me crystallized into a certainty. Some one, or something, was following us. Twice I had seen the grass tops on our back trail move, barely, but yet move.

"You go on and then come back fast as the devil when I holler," I whispered to De Mille, and, behind an elbow in the wall of vegetation, slipped out of the scow into two feet of water.

I hadn't long to wait. With a nearly imperceptible rippling, the bow of a yellow canoe pushed by me, then came the arm, the body of our Seminole visitor, and I had him down under the water before he could utter more than a surprised "Gugh!" The noble red man was no weakling, but I am not a subject for a sanitarium myself, and he was half between being choked and drowned when I set him on his pins and yelled for the scow. We hauled him on board and sat him down none too gently on a seat, and then I orated.

There were many words to what I said, but the sense amounted to what he meant by following us, who was he, why had he made all those crazy noises and rung a spook in on us? I paused for breath.

"Show you way out," he grunted stolidly. "Long, long way now. Long, long, long way to-morrow. Long, long, long——"

"And it will be a 'long, long' time before you get back to your wigwam, if ever," I announced angrily. "You take that pole and push along this floating egg crate, and, remember, if you try to run—swim away—I'll shoot you as full of holes as a Swiss cheese."

The entire afternoon, his canoe towing behind, that impassive buck poled

us along the high, impenetrable wall of grass, while we poked into the domestic affairs of coot, duck, rail, and warbler. When night came, our involuntary gondolier was sent up into the bow with some food, and we settled ourselves in the stern, talking in whispers.

It was plain that the Seminole could not have been responsible for one-tenth of the night's racket, and we easily deduced that he must have other companions, probably white men. How to find out who and where they were was the problem. Short of boiling the savage alive, I, for one, could think of no way of drawing this information from him, and Noisy was equally at a loss.

It began to rain at sunset, and we huddled under a tarpaulin. I picked up a rope and rubber blanket, starting forward to tie up our prisoner and protect him from the wet. At that very moment an inspiration came to me, and, flinging the covering into the bow, I went back to De Mille. A few whispered words and he understood. Gently we drew the Indian's craft to the stern of the scow—once it scraped on the bottom, the water was so shallow—and, after listening breathlessly in the darkness, I slipped into the canoe and lay flat.

It was a crazy scheme, but it worked. About midnight—and, Lord, how hard it had been to keep awake—a shadow loomed beside me in the blackness and the canoe began to move noiselessly forward through the rain. The Indian was towing it, the painter over his shoulder, and I sat up, training my gun on the dim outline of his back. Not two hundred yards from where we started, he began to grope in the water, grunted with satisfaction, pulled up something from the bottom, and turned to find my automatic against his stomach.

I took what he had picked up out of his hand. It was a chunk of iron,

and to it was attached a wire that led straight into the thick of the high, reed wall.

It was too dark, and besides I was too sleepy to follow the wire that night, so, tying the painter of the canoe firmly to it, I marched Mr. Indian back to the scow, bound him hand and foot, and was asleep in two minutes.

Binding the Indian, and leaving him that way all night, was not a sporting proposition. The reason we could do it was that we were scared. Not of anything we could see or might be brought bang up against, but of what we couldn't put our hands on, or understand the why and wherefore of.

I was ashamed of myself when I unbound the Seminole in the morning, and I hated my companion because he had let me tie the Indian up. It's true I should probably have biffed Noisy the night before if he had objected to what I was doing, but I hated him for not having objected just the same.

In silence, we ate our breakfast, and, still in silence, each of us, the red man without orders, picked up a pole and pushed the scow down to where the canoe was moored.

As might have been expected, the wire served the same purpose in the water that blazed trees do on dry land. It marked a trail, one that a canoe could easily follow but that was really too narrow for our bateau. Breaking through the first barrier of reeds was the hardest part, but the rest was no motor-boat ride. We sank to our thighs in the mud while hauling the scow over the shallow places, cut hands and faces on the cruel saw grass, and it was breathlessly, burning hot. The vegetation swept and raked the boat, finally pulling the trigger of a gun which came within an ace of blowing my head off. Warned by this, while the Indian and De Mille were in the bow, I slipped all the shells out of the shotguns, and even unloaded my

automatic, which I wore under my left armpit. Till early afternoon, we pushed and shoved forward, and came at last to another barrier of reeds higher even than the previous one that had blocked our progress. Both of us flopped down exhausted, Noisy leaning over the side to dash water in his face, and the Indian passed behind my back down to the stern. I turned just in time to see him make a grab for one of the guns.

They say that no Seminole will injure a white man, but I'll never put that "they say" past one of them again. This one did not wait to threaten, just brought the gun to his shoulder and snapped both empty barrels at me. I yanked out my automatic—it was empty, too, but he didn't know it—and covered him.

"Drop that gun," I said disgustedly—somehow I couldn't get mad—"and go up into the bow and pole."

Pushing the blunt nose of the scow against the twelve-foot grass, we gained inch by inch, till suddenly light showed through, the boat shot forward, upsetting me on top of Noisy, and the Indian dove over the bow into open water.

We were floating in a small lagoon a hundred yards from a large island. The shore was well above water level, and on its gray sand stood an evenly spaced orange grove of the largest trees I have ever seen. A dock, near which were several canoes, bottom up, ran out into the water, and from it a broad avenue stretched up to an ample, colonial house, its roof and pillars, instead of the conventional white, painted the exact shade of the yellow reeds. Over the door hung an old, old flag, solid blue, with one white star, the first battle flag of the Confederate States of America.

"Come on!" I said to Noisy, loading both shotguns and handing him one. "We've just busted back sixty years

into the past and are going to pay our respects to Jeff Davis."

The avenue between the orange trees was swimming in the heat as we walked up it, and, in the house, a fresh young voice began to sing:

"We are a band of brothers,
And native to the soil,
Fighting for the property.
We gained by honest toil;
And when our rights were threatened,
The cry rose near and far—
Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag
That bears the single star.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!
For Southern rights hurrah!
Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag
That bears the single star.

"As long as the Union
Was faithful to her trust,
Like friends and like brothers
Both kind were we and just;
But now, when Northern treachery
Attempts——"

There was a furious shout of rage, followed by a shot, then a long "Co-he-e-e!" A dozen blue and white-clad figures appeared and disappeared among the orange trees.

"Forward into the asylum!" I commanded. "Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag and all the little flaglets!"

Up the steps we marched, laid our guns on the porch, and Noisy raised a brass knocker and let it fall. The door opened, and a Chinaman—yes, that's what I said—a Chinaman bowed before us.

"Will you please tell your master that two men who have lost their way would be glad to speak to him?" said De Mille.

"I ketchum master," the Oriental answered, and slammed the door in our faces.

"Let's sit down," I suggested, beyond surprise at anything, and turned back to where we had left our guns—they were gone.

Noisy was abnormally calm. He

made three remarks one after the other:

"What a beautiful old house!

"The oranges look as though they might be ripe for picking.

"Do you think it will rain to-night, Wandering?"

"Have you read 'Dare-devil Dick, the Boy Scout,' and do you know how to do the crawl stroke?" I asked in my best society tones. He shut up.

After ten minutes, the door opened violently, and an old, white-haired gentleman came swiftly out onto the porch.

"A thousand pardons, my dear sirs," he whispered, "a thousand, thousand pardons! We receive so few visitors that my servants simply lose their heads when we are fortunate enough to have guests. You must come inside at once and I will see you are provided with fresh garments; yours seem to have suffered. Afterward, and not before, we may talk."

While he was speaking, I had an opportunity to examine him, and he sure was a curious specimen. Aside from his voice, which was remarkable enough in itself, being a mere whisper, he was very, very old and more wrinkled than I have ever seen a human being. His goatee and mustache were dead white, his eyes the exact color of a lemon, and his skin saffron yellow.

"We are imposing on you," answered De Mille, "appearing quite unannounced, but I fear we have no alternative," and we followed within.

I have been in most of the famous bars and gambling houses—places on which the owners don't care how much money they spend—in the United States, but their gorgeousness in comparison to that house was as the little deuce of spades in a ten-cent pack of cards to the king of hearts in a faro deck. The walls were hung with shining swords and shields, with red, yellow, and green silks embroidered with flowers, the floor was covered with the

richest carpets, and, at the end of the hall, was enthroned a double-bellied idol sitting cross-legged on a gilded altar. The chairs were bamboo, their backs fretted with gold, silver, and scarlet, and there was a pleasant smell of sandalwood in the air.

We were ushered into a room with two low beds, and, with a whispered intimation that a servant would bring us fresh garments, the little, old, wrinkled man bowed himself out.

An impassive Chinaman brought us some white clothes, and we fixed ourselves up as best we could. Noisy's face was covered with cuts from the cruel saw grass that made it look as though he had tried to shave with a dull razor in the dark. My principal injury was to my nose, and it had begun to swell horribly.

Again the Chinese butler appeared, this time with the information:

"Master send when ketchum tiffin."

We sat down to wait. It was one o'clock. An hour passed, then another. De Mille stretched himself on a bed and went to sleep. For the hundredth time I catalogued the room in my mind, walls hung with dull brown silk, two beds, two washstands, a clothes press, several chairs, and that was all. Hardly enough to hold an active man's attention for half a day. French windows opened onto a vine-shrouded porch—we were on the second story—and finally, careless of politeness, I stepped outside and looked around. The porch was at the back of the house, and I could see half the island. It was one great orange grove set in a narrow frame of sunlit water beyond which stretched the unbroken yellow of the saw grass. The gray-white sand was hidden, for the most part, beneath the polished green of the leaves, but around the house it was bare. A small shed stood about fifty yards away, throwing a long shadow to the west, and, just beyond the shadow lay a man, face

downward, our Seminole guide. There was no mistaking the meaning of that huddled sprawl, I've seen it too many times. The Indian was dead, shot through the head.

I moved to the other end of the porch. From a window just beyond the railing came a soft hiss:

"I'm sorry I scared you—had the men scare you—but you nearly shot me. Don't tell father or I shall be kept in my room and—and I want to see the gray-haired young man again."

"I won't tell," I whispered, trying to lean far enough over the rail to catch a glimpse of my interlocutor's face, but a Chinaman in a blue blouse emerged from beneath the trees, and I dodged back through the French window. Before I could more than wake Noisy, the door opened—none of the Chinamen seemed to have been taught to knock—and a Celestial beckoned to us. We followed him downstairs and into a yellow silk-hung dining room.

The little old man rose from the head of the table.

"I regret that my wife and daughter will not share our meal; they have already lunched. You will meet them this evening at dinner."

De Mille bowed. I imitated him, and we sat down.

Of course, the first thing to do was to tell our host our names and business, and Noisy did it perfectly. He explained that we were after birds, especially flamingos, for scientific study, had lost our way—he did not mention our night terrors—and a Seminole Indian had guided us, under compulsion, to the island.

Our host listened carefully, but made no comment, save to ask in a whisper if we were connected in any capacity with the Federal government, and seemed pleased at our negative.

The food was delicious and watered with the hottest and strongest Tokay I

have ever tasted. General Carter—it transpired that this was his title and name—talked every second in his tiny, whispering voice, talked as though this was his first opportunity for speech for years.

We learned that he had gone to China after the Civil War, prospered and married there, and returned to America to spend his remaining days. The reconstructed South did not please him, so he had moved into the Everglades to this hidden island, bringing with him Chinese coolies and house servants to use instead of niggers. "They are practically slaves, you know, which makes it seem so homelike, quite the old days over again."

Noisy managed to hint at our departure. The old Confederate would not hear of it. As a matter of fact, he explained; one of his retainers, a Seminole Indian, who alone could guide us out, had met with an accident. We should have to wait until another Indian, who was delivering a few boxes of oranges at Miami for shipment, returned, but he hoped to have us as his guests much longer. Come to think of it, several flamingos had nested on a small islet near by for years. That might interest us.

It certainly did interest De Mille. He ate no more lunch, was mad to get started, to the old fellow's rather ill-concealed annoyance, it seemed to me.

Anyway, I hadn't been happy during the luncheon's whispered monologue. Our host may not have been lying in what he said, but he certainly was in what he did not say, and in the impression he aimed to leave on our minds. Men who like to talk as much as he did don't hide away from their fellows without some good reason. All this jabber about Chinese coolies sounded fishy to me; it was simply too crazy, and then there was that dead Seminole lying out in the sun. I couldn't make

head or tail of it, and I did not like it at all, not one little bit.

Luncheon over, De Mille assumed that we were going straight to the flamingoes. The saffron-faced old man had an ugly glint in his eye, but he did not attempt to gainsay him. We all walked to the eastern end of the island, and there, a few rods away, on a mud flat, were the birds—eight of them. There were hundreds of the old, stool-like mud nests going into ruins—the rookery must once have been an enormous one—and four flamingos sat on new nests, their feet tucked under them, not hanging down outside as you sometimes see them in pictures. Seven of the birds were a beautiful, rosy pink, and the eighth was jet black.

The ornithologist just looked and looked, and then he breathed a sigh of utter bliss.

"I'm going for the cameras," he said, and left us without another word.

The general insisted on showing me all over his domain. He was wonderfully spry if he were the age he appeared, and his little, whispering voice never ceased for a moment.

The island was about a mile long, and half of that broad. It was planted with every kind of citrus tree I have ever heard of, and manicured to a frazzle by the Chinese laborers, seventeen of whom I counted. In addition to the large colonial mansion, the small shed behind it and a miniature fruit-boxing plant, there was a group of servants' quarters at the western end.

The conversation was utterly one-sided until we got back to the house, and then I managed to slip in a question as to how he shipped his oranges. There was a clear channel two miles away, I was informed, that ran to the Miami River. The boxes were transported there by canoe, and placed on a barge that landed them at Miami.

Inside the house, General Carter regretfully left me at my door. Within,

I put a chair beneath the knob and hurried out onto the porch. The body of the Seminole was gone from the shadow of the shed, but I thought I could still make out a dark stain on the sand. Busy with most unpleasant thoughts, I turned to leave the porch, and came face to face with a young girl, her fingers against her lips cautioning silence.

Have you ever seen a play called "Madame Butterfly"? If so, you may have some idea how that girl—child—looked. She was dressed in a white kimono sprinkled with pink flowers, and there were seed pearls on the sleeves, from which her slender, bare arms protruded like the white stamens of some wonderful orchid. Her mouth was a tiny, crimson thing, her hair and eyes jet black, and her eyes, placed slightly slantwise like a Chinaman's, were full of tears.

"You won't anger father, will you?" she pleaded in a whisper. "You will do everything he even hints. Such a little thing sometimes maddens him. Osceola is dead," she choked on a sob, "and he couldn't help your getting here. And, oh, don't, don't let the gray-haired young man cross him! Please, *please* don't! I—I kissed him in his sleep when I went out with the men to scare you away, he looked so clean and young," she broke down, sobbing uncontrollably beneath her breath.

"That's all right, my dear; that's all right," I tried to comfort her. "No one will make your father mad—" But she didn't wait to hear the rest of my sentence, ran into our room, pulled aside the silk hangings, and disappeared through a door that closed noiselessly behind her.

De Mille came in shortly afterward, his handsome, young face, with its incongruous crown of gray hair, radiant with happiness and his arms full of cameras.

"Shake, Wandering!" he chortled.

"Shake twice! I've got the finest lot of photographs you have ever seen. And think of finding an example of mendelism among flamingos! No one will believe in that black bird. I'll simply have to shoot it, which I hate to do, and take it back with us."

"If you ever get back," I interrupted, and then I told him all that had happened, except, of course, about the girl kissing him. She hadn't really meant to tell me that; it had just slipped out. "So, you see, it behooves us to mind our p's and q's and all the rest of the alphabet," I concluded, "or we'll find ourselves out on the sand with a bullet through our heads."

Noisy gave a low whistle, and then sat silent, digesting my information.

"We'll just have to do the best we can," he mused aloud. "Never heard anything so crazy in all my life. The wicked old rabbit! Suppose the Chinamen *are* practically slaves, as he said, and would cheerfully commit murder for him."

The door opened abruptly, and a Chinaman stuck his head in.

"Ketchum dinner," he announced, and popped out again.

General Carter was waiting for us in the hall, and guided us into a drawing-room. There sat an enormously fat Chinese woman, and, behind her, stood the girl.

"My dear Esther, Mr. Philip de Mille, Mr. Wandering Smith! Gentlemen, my wife, Mrs. Carter; my daughter, Miss Carter!"

We bowed, and I said it was pleasant weather. Noisy, as usual, said nothing, but his eyes were very busy. The girl wore a long, pink, silky dress that accentuated her slimness and made her skin whiter, her hair and eyes blacker by contrast. Gosh, but she was beautiful! Delicately, like a flower!

We got seated in the dining room somehow, and then the old man began to talk. There was no one else in it.

That whisper went steadily, evenly, monotonously on till I began to think of it as an endless slender wire and wonder if it couldn't be snapped by a quick blow, or would have to be cut with pliers. Once De Mille said something aside to the girl in that booming voice of his, but she raised eyes so full of fear to him that he did not attempt to address her again.

That was a great feast all right, all right. We sat like dummies, not saying a word while the old, yellow-faced gentleman whispered steadily at us.

After dinner, we adjourned to a room with a piano in it, and the general asked his daughter for a song. De Mille followed her and turned over the music, and, for the two verses, we had a respite from that whispering voice.

"The years creep slowly by, Lorena;

The snow is on the grass again;

The sun's low down the sky, Lorena;

The frost gleams where the flowers have been.

But the heart throbs on as warmly now

As when the summer days were nigh;

Oh, the sun can never dip so low

Adown affection's cloudless sky.

"A hundred months have passed, Lorena,

Since last I held that hand in mine,

And felt the pulse beat fast, Lorena,

But mine beat faster far than thine;

A hundred months—'twas flowery May,

When up the hilly slopes we climbed,

To watch the dying of the day,

To hear the distant church bells chime."

"Quite enough, my dear, and thank you," the old man broke in. "That song always reminds me of the night before the first battle of Bull Run——" He was off again.

Coffee and cognac were brought to us, and Noisy gulped down more than one of his favorite coffee-laced-with-brandied drinks. I could plainly see his nerves were getting frayed to the raw by everlastingly acting the part of audience, and I waited for something to happen. It did.

"May we not hear Miss Carter sing again?" he broke in on the continuous flow.

The general turned his pale, lemon-colored eyes on him, and they became suffused with blood.

"I am talking, sir," he whispered, and the whisper made it sound worse than if he had shouted: "Be so good as not to interrupt me again."

De Mille turned a deep scarlet; the girl gasped; the old man went calmly on and on and on with his reminiscences.

Suddenly he came to a full stop, looking interrogatively at me.

"Most interesting," I said, without the slightest idea of what he had been talking about.

"You agree with me, then?"

"Bet your—I mean, entirely."

He rose from his chair.

"We keep early hours here. It is our only house rule. To bed by ten and lights out by half past."

He clapped his hands, and two Chinamen appeared with lighted candles.

"Good night and sleep well," our host whispered as we went up the stairs. Once inside our room and the door shut, Noisy began to roar.

"Go to it, old top!" I encouraged him heartily. "You can't call that human phonograph anything that will hurt my feelings."

The man was fair eloquent, as my Scotch friend, McKee, would have put it, but right in the middle I had to clap my hand over his mouth. The door opened, and the butler appeared with two glasses on a tray.

"You ketchum nightcap and put out lightee," he droned, and was gone.

My, but I slept hard! I tried to wake and couldn't, though some one seemed to be calling me. Finally, through a kind of stupor, it penetrated to my consciousness that something was thrashing around the room like an angry boa constrictor. Instinctively,

my hand sought for the gun which I had put under my pillow. It was not there. Broad awake now, I struck a match and lit the candle. De Mille and a Chinaman were wrestling all over the room, the latter trying to escape, the former hanging to him like a bulldog. A well-directed kick in the stomach quieted the intruder, and I retrieved my automatic from inside his blouse. Opening the door, I applied my foot where it would help him along the fastest, and he scuttled out of sight in the dark.

"What in thunder does this mean?" gasped Noisy, nursing a bruised shin.

"They wanted my gun for a souvenir, that's all," I answered. "Go to bed. To-morrow we'll plan to get away from here, even if we have to ride your pet flamingos."

The general did not appear at breakfast, but his daughter did. She presided over the coffee cups as though she had been used to receiving strange, battered guys that blew in from nowhere all her life, and she chattered like a flock of sparrows.

Ten years had she lived on the island and was only eight when her father left China. She didn't remember her mother—father had married a second time—but she had a miniature of her, and she was very beautiful.

Noisy said he could well believe it, and got the snub he deserved in her prompt reply that she took after the male side of the house.

Of course, it was a strange life, living away from the world and seeing no men—people, but she had never known any other. And father had promised her that next year she should go to Paris. Books kept her happy. Father gave her lots of them. Had we read "Ivanhoe" and "Lorna Doone" and "Henry Esmond"? She thought they were just splendid! Then there were her pets. We *must* come and see Richard Cœur de Lion immediately

after breakfast. Father never appeared till noon—he had been sick a good deal lately—and she could have us all to herself.

Quite a bunch of conversation! I made a mental note that she really did take after her dad in at least one respect, though Noisy didn't appear to mind her chatter; in fact, seemed to like it.

I'll give it to you! I am romantic, and the way that he looked at that slanty-eyed, vibrant, fresh young girl tickled me nearly to death. It was love at first sight, if I have ever seen it, and most kinds of real love start exactly that way—right on the jump. My courtships did—both of them—and I had so cared for each of my wives in turn that I never married again.

Out in the sunlight, the girl put up a parasol, walking by De Mille's side, while I trailed along behind. She laughed and talked every minute, and, as now and then I heard his voice in about the ratio of sixteen to one, I decided they were getting along famously.

Meanwhile, my eyes were busy, and I noted two very pertinent things: first, that four of the Chinese coolies were following us at a respectable distance, but none the less following us; second, that not only had all the canoes disappeared from the neighborhood of the landing, but also our boat was gone, its contents piled orderly on the dock.

By this time, we had reached the eastern end of the island, where the flamingo rookery was located, and Miss Carter asked us to stand back among the orange trees. She walked to the edge of the water, and, raising her hands trumpetwise to her lips, sent a long "Co-he-e-e" over to where the birds were nesting.

You may believe me or not, as you please, but this is what actually happened: Seven of the flamingos rose in the air with a metallic clanging, trail-

ing off across the sky, the eighth, and it was the black one, waded, with slow dignity, across to the girl, and there she fed it something she took from her pocket, its queer, hooked beak between her cupped hands.

"He's Richard Cœur de Lion," she explained, coming back to us, while the great bird moved majestically off through the water, "and he's a dear, just as tame, as tame! You see, the others fly away each day to where they can get the little shells they feed on, but we keep Richard's wings tied down, and I feed him with the tiny clam things the Indians get for me." She held out some miniature spiral shells to Noisy. "It's so ingenious the reason we keep his wings bound," she continued, "I just must tell you. When the Indians get in from Miami with supplies, we turn him loose, and he flies with the other flamingos. The Seminoles see him and come from all over the Everglades in their canoes to take away the orange boxes. You see, father is afraid of flooding the market, so he sends out his oranges one box by each Indian. Then they are shipped from different places and don't get to New York or San Francisco all at the same time. Isn't that clever? And he gets enormous prices—five hundred dollars for a single box——"

"Your mother wants you at the house, Esther," came a whisper from behind us, and we turned to find the general standing not a yard away. And the sight of him nearly made me take to my heels. The man was loathsome, positively loathsome! Shaking and trembling, he stood before us wrapped in an old gray dressing gown. The pupils of his eyes seemed to have entirely disappeared, leaving them a liquid mass of light yellow pigment, quite expressionless, horribly nonhuman; his lips were drawn back, revealing in his upper jaw a palpably false set of teeth, while a few stumps stood

out from his lower gums; his saffron skin was mottled, damp, and dry in alternate patches, and from him emanated a sickly sweetish odor that caught you by the throat and gagged you.

"I'm sorry this thing happened, gentlemen," he hissed in his painful whisper—the girl had fled—"but it leaves me no alternative. I must tell you the reason I isolate myself and my family here. I am bearing a heavy burden of sorrow. My daughter is quite wanting, quite insane. She suffers from the hallucination that we live entirely from the sale of the oranges for which she believes I get extraordinary prices. Really I sell none, just ship a few boxes to my friends, my Chinese friends." He paused a moment as though to let this sink in. "I suppose it is just as well for you to know, however, as it may not be practicable to send you away from here for some time. You will excuse me now. I am not a well man and seldom leave my room before noon."

We spent the rest of the morning examining the nests and watching that great black bird. It was true enough about its wings being bound. They were loosely confined by a light leather strap about the body, not so as to deprive it entirely of their use, but tight enough to prevent flight.

How much more of what the poor girl had told us was fact, and what did it all mean?

Luncheon was much the same as the day before, the only difference being the presence of the ladies. They might just as well not have been there, however, as far as adding to the verbal gayety went. The general did all the talking, or rather whispering, and that whisper never ceased. Afterward he marched us out to inspect the packing plant, and, while I was being lulled into a state of pure imbecility by a description of the battle of Manassas,

the cowardly ornithologist sneaked away and left me alone with this human whispering machine.

Later in the afternoon, when my brain was reeling, the general suggested that we go out on the water, summoning two Chinamen by clapping his hands. They produced a skiff from somewhere, and we rowed around the island. Then it was that that old scalawag put one over on me, Wandering Smith, who should have known better. The manner of it was as follows: An alligator was sunning itself in the reeds; in the most natural way in the world, my host asked me for my gun to take a shot at it. I handed it to him, all unsuspecting. His back to me, he pulled the trigger and there was a splash.

"So sorry," he whispered remorsefully; "it jerked out of my hand and went overboard. There are twenty feet of water here. I'll send some men out later to dive for it. Now, at Bull Run, when the Yankees broke, I——" Can you beat it? And when he left me at the door of my room I plainly saw in the breast pocket of his coat the outline of a gun—my gun!

It was too late for more than a hurried word with Noisy before dinner, and he was simply bursting with something he had to tell me.

Merciful heavens! What an evening! I listened to the history of the Civil War, detailed with a minuteness even beyond Old Bug's scientific description of a beetle. We had no music—the general's head ached—just whisper, whisper, whisper till my brain reeled, and, when ten o'clock came, I was so tired I saw black.

Up in our room, Noisy could hardly wait for the door to shut.

"That exquisite thing is no more mad than you or I," he burst out. "She simply has never been away from this cursed, mysterious island, and takes for gospel truth everything that old devil

tells her. She is as innocent and far sweeter than a child, and, you must acknowledge, talks extremely well."

And a lot I should have liked to add, but didn't. I've heard them talk that way before, and I knew what it meant. Noisy was a goner all right. When a man compares a woman to a child, you can take it from me that it's all over but the wedding tears. It certainly was a pretty romance, but it didn't help clear up matters for us.

"Did she say anything about her father?" I asked.

"Only that he was very good and kind, except sometimes in the mornings. The blessed child says she loves him—without knowledge of what love means," he sighed.

"When you meet her to-morrow, try to get her to talk about him."

"How did you know I was going to meet her?" he asked in amazement.

"Go sleep or I'll tell you 'bout battle Bull Run," I answered, and immediately closed my eyes.

Perhaps I had been out of the world for two hours when I woke to a house echoing with yell after yell of agony. Out of bed and into my shoes and pants with one jump, I felt around for some weapon. The candlestick, a heavy, silver one, came under my hand, and, cautioning Noisy to stay where he was, I slipped out the door. The yells ceased, to be replaced by a succession of thin, chuckling laughs, and I followed the sound downstairs, beyond the dining room, back of the altar that held the ugly, double-bellied god. Creeping on all fours, I parted a heavy curtain and peeped through.

The fat Chinese woman was bending over a tiny lamp, holding something in the flame that gave off a thick, greasy smoke. The general lay on a couch in his dressing gown, propped up with pillows, and it was from him that the low-toned, senile mirth came. Against the wall, his hands tied to iron rings

above his head, half hung, half stood a Chinaman, his bare back toward me, and that back was covered with long welts. Beside him was the shaking butler, a wire-lashed whip in his hand.

"Three more!" commanded the yellow-faced old gentleman.

The whip rose and fell three times.

"That's all," whispered the old man.

"Sent you for the Yankee's gun last night. You failed to get it; had to get it myself. Let this be a lesson to you to obey me in future. Unloose him!"

The butler reached up and cut the thongs from the iron rings. His face was toward me, and I saw he was licking his lips with fear. The bruised man salaamed three times to the floor and backed out past me.

The Chinese woman finished what she was doing over the flame of the lamp, and, holding a ball of sticky, smoking stuff on a long knitting needle, took from a little table a foot-long bamboo fitted with a tiny metal bowl—an opium pipe. Plunging the reeking mass into the bowl, she handed it to the saffron-faced old man, who greedily carried it to his lips.

Most opium smokers, I believe, reach the poppy coma after three or four pipes. The whispering man smoked ten, the butler cooking the pills, the woman crouching by the couch and handing him the pipes, the last three of which she had to hold to his lips. Then the smoker's eyes closed and he sank back among the cushions. For several moments, the woman watched him, lifted his eyelid with her finger tip, and then dismissed the butler with a low-spoken word. He passed so close to me between the curtains that I could have touched him.

Cooking another opium pill, the fat woman stretched herself on a lounge near the small table. Thrice she replenished the tiny bowl, and, the last time, I saw my automatic lying on the table beneath her hand. Four pipes,

the bamboo receptacle slipped to the floor, and she, too, slept.

The candles were gutting low. Through my peephole floated the nauseating sweet fumes of the opium. The house was very still. Inch by inch I rose to my feet and reached my hand to the edge of the curtain, then withdrew it quickly. There were cautious footsteps stealing up the hall. Holding my breath, I waited. A shadow crossed the slit of light from between the curtains. The curtains themselves were slowly drawn back, and a Chinaman, a long knife in his hand, tiptoed past me. Shifting my candlestick, I brought it down with all my strength on his skull, jumped over his falling body, snatched my gun from the table, and swiftly, silently, sped upstairs.

The first light of morning was just beginning to filter in through the long French windows. From outside came the soft twitter of early-rising birds. Within, the house was silent as the grave.

We breakfasted late and alone the next morning, and, out under the orange trees, laid our plans for the day. I was to try and locate the boat or any other available craft, and, if possible, pump some of the Chinamen. Noisy, who had a date with Miss Carter at ten to feed Richard Cœur de Lion, was to encourage her to talk as much as possible—a rather easy job, I thought, though I kept that opinion to myself.

There were no boats or canoes of any description on the island, and I finally decided they must be hidden in the saw grass, to be produced only when needed. All the Chinamen, under the direction of the butler, who also seemed to be a kind of a foreman, were busy packing oranges. The orange boxes were ranged in a long row, the covers leaning against them, and on each cover was stenciled the name of the consignee, always a China-

man. No two boxes went to the same address, and their destinations ranged from Houston, Texas, to Chicago, Illinois, even including San Francisco. The manner of the packing was rather odd. One of the two compartments of each box was filled full, the other received only a layer of oranges in the bottom, and then, with its cover, was carried inside a room with a lock on the door, and placed on a long table.

I watched the work going on for some time, and then the butler passed behind me.

"You ketchum spring. I come," he said in a low voice, and mingled with the workmen.

As nonchalantly as I could, I sauntered off among the orange trees until I could no longer see the packing plant through the shiny green leaves, then hurried straight to where I had been directed. The Chinese butler was waiting for me, and, with a "You come," led the way to the western end of the island behind the servants' quarters. There he paused and pointed to seven little round mounds, two very recently made, decorated with pieces of shell, gay scraps of paper, and bundles of faded flowers.

"All dead," he indicated, with a sweep of his arm. "T'ee, fo', fiv' China boy, Indian, 'nother China boy this morning. Gen' Carter kill. You lookee!"

He raised his blouse, and turned his bare back to me. It was covered with half-healed welts, exactly such wounds as I had seen inflicted the night before by the steel-lashed whip in his own hands.

"You ketchum way from here?" he asked.

I shook my head, thinking rapidly. Evidently the old, saffron-faced opium fiend not only beat his men, but even killed them at his pleasure. Also, they did not know how to get away. The saw grass formed an impenetrable maze

that only the Seminoles could thread, and they, in some mysterious fashion, were evidently bound to the old Confederate. It was too much for me.

"You no ketchum way out," begged the butler again. Again I shook my head sadly. For a moment, he stood thinking, and then, once more, spoke:

"China boy ketchum Indian. Burn him fleet and hlands till he show way out. You kill Gen' Carter. We alle glow way."

I was willing to listen to a poor brute who wanted to escape from being flayed with a wire whip or, perhaps, even killed, but when this same brute suggested that I murder my host and connive at the torture of an Indian, it was quite a different matter. I told him there was nothing doing, and turned and went back to the house.

Noisy was waiting in our room and had a lot to report from Miss Carter. A Chinaman, whom her father had punished, had tried to murder him the night before and had been knocked senseless by the faithful butler. Faithful butler! I remembered his expression after he showed me the welts on his bare back. Later, the Chinaman had died. She was all broken up over it. How could any one want to hurt her good, kind father? "Then a wonderful thing happened, Wandering," De Mille continued. "I tried to comfort her, patted her shoulder, and, before I knew it, I had her in my arms. I am the only man she has ever kissed—how many girls can truly say that of their lovers?—and we are going to tell her father this evening."

"You are going to tell her father no such thing, young man," I announced firmly. "First, we are going to find a way out of here back to civilization. You can take the girl with you if you wish. It won't be the first time, or, I hope, the last that I act as chaperon for two young fools. We are going to find a way to get out of here, first

of all, though, you understand! I haven't the slightest desire to be buried with six Chinamen and an Indian in the middle of the Everglades."

The general did not come to lunch. Miss Carter did. Whenever the butler was out of the room—I was uncomfortable every time he passed behind my back—the lovers held hands, and I know I beamed on them. Give me a good, old-fashioned love affair every time for real enjoyment; it beats horse-racing, cocking mains, and even prize fights.

Just as the dessert was being served, there was a chorus of "Co-he-e-es" from the water. The girl sprang to her feet with a cry of pleasure.

"It's the Indians bringing things from Miami. There will be books and new dresses for me. I must run and untie Richard's wings."

We followed her out of doors, then walked down to the dock, where were four dugouts, and watched the coolies unload four large boxes which they carried into the packing house. The girl returned quickly, and, as we went back to the house, followed by the butler carrying her bundles, a great black flamingo flew eastward across the grassy waste of the Everglades.

The general met us at the door, wearing all his teeth, but looking frightfully sinister and rather ill. He apologized in his usual whisper for neglecting us, and regretted that he would not be able to spend the afternoon with me—he had forgotten to give me the aftermath of the battle of Chickamauga—but the packing house would claim him till the evening.

Noisy and the girl wandered off. I established myself on the front porch with a copy of "The Life of 'Stonewall' Jackson"—local color—that I had no intention of reading.

Almost immediately, Seminoles began to arrive at the dock, pushing out of the saw grass from every direction.

I had hoped to locate the opening of a channel, but either the canoes could slip between the reeds like snakes, or there were countless water trails abutting on the island. Chinamen came from the packing house, each with a box of oranges on his shoulder, which, unloaded in a canoe, was whisked out of sight into the saw grass. I watched thirty-eight thus disappear, and sauntered down to get a nearer view of the operations. Ten more boxes went away, not one word exchanged between Seminole and Chinaman, and then there was an accident. One of the coolies stumbled, down came his box on the heavy planking of the dock, split, from one side rolled out the yellow fruit, and from the other, breaking through a casing of oranges, cascaded a dozen two-inch square tins.

I walked quickly back to the house, not wishing the general to know what had been revealed to me. A glance was enough. Once before, seized on a ship from India, I had seen those little square cans, and I knew they contained opium.

No wonder the orange boxes were addressed only to Chinamen! No wonder the general kept the secret of the way to and from his island inviolate!

The Indians continued to arrive and take away the oranges in a steady stream, until Noisy returned, and we went upstairs.

"Sorry, Wandering," were his first words, "but Esther is going to tell her father of our engagement. Couldn't persuade her not to, couldn't persuade her, then, to let me do it. She says if he gets angry, he won't hurt her, while he might kill me."

I whistled. What was there to do about it, though?

"I'll lend you my gun," I offered.

"Never saw the time I needed a gun yet," he answered haughtily, "especially against an old man."

"That listens noble," I remarked.

He made me kind of sore. "But allow me to suggest, just as a precautionary measure, and in no way as a reflection on your courage, that you wear a geography in the seat of your pants—I mean trousers."

He was about to answer me unkindly when the butler stuck his head in the door, intimating briefly that it was time to catch dinner.

That was one nervous meal! No one said a word. The fat Chinese woman never took her eyes from the general; the general glowered at Noisy, his daughter, and me, turn by turn. I watched him out of the corner of my eye, my automatic stuck in the waistband of my trousers. The lovers just mooned at one another.

We all rose at the end of the meal, and the old gentleman detained us, while the ladies went into the drawing-room.

"I understand you want to marry my daughter," he whispered at De Mille.

The boy bowed, flushing pink.

"You have known her three days, you have abused my hospitality, and you are a d——d Yankee cur. Go to your room! I'll deal with you tomorrow, as I deal with my servants."

Gosh! I got to my feet, and Noisy stood up, just trembling with rage. His mouth opened and shut without a sound coming out, and then he suddenly bolted. I started to follow him.

"Just a moment," came the whisper. "You remember I was going to tell you about the end of the battle of Chickamauga."

"You ain't," I shouted, and, jumping out the door, ran upstairs.

In the drawing-room, Miss Carter was singing:

"Wake! dearest, wake! 'Tis thy lover who calls.
List! dearest, list! The dew gently falls,
Arise to thy lattice, the moon is asleep,
The bright stars above us their bright vigil keep."

"We're in for it now," I said to Noisy, who was striding up and down the floor, his voice rumbling like an earthquake, "and as soon as it's light, we are going to beat it. That opium fiend isn't much good in the morning."

"We're not going to beat it without Esther," firmly spoke De Mille.

"Oh, bring her along, the black flamingo, and the family cat, too, if you wish," I answered crossly. "The more the merrier!"

Before we turned in, I jammed a chair back under the doorknob and arranged an artistic fortification of washstands, chairs, and bric-a-brac that would go down with a crash at the slightest touch in front of the French windows. Then I turned in and slept till nearly daybreak.

Just before dawn, when it is darkest, I woke with a feeling of insufferable heat. There was a roaring noise outside like the wind through a treetop, and suddenly it was light—red light.

"Philip! Philip!" cried a voice. "The house is burning! Come quick!"

Out of bed, I touched the girl's soft shoulder, caught her hand, and, dragging Noisy to his feet, we slipped through the door I had forgotten, behind the silk hangings. Quickly we were in the hall and down the stairs. A sheet of flame burst from behind the curtains above the hideous god on the altar, and a fierce chorus of "Co-he-e-es" came from outside. The Chinamen were massed before the front door as I flung it open, and greeted us with a yell.

"Pick up your girl and make for the landing!" I commanded, and fired two shots into the thick of the crowd. It broke, scattered, and we found ourselves running down the long avenue. There were plenty of canoes near the dock. Launching the largest one, we prepared to push off.

"Father! Get father!" begged the girl from her lover's arms. "They'll kill him!"

"Good riddance!" I said beneath my breath; but, nevertheless, jumped to the dock, shoving off the canoe and shouting, "Wait at the flamingo island," sped back toward the house, now a roaring volcano of flame. As I reached the edge of the shadow, the butler appeared on the porch, holding something in his hand. He raised it that all might see—a saffron-faced head, the eyes closed, the skin mottled. Turning, I ran eastward through the orange trees, and, splashing through the water, crossed to the mud flat, beyond which showed the dim outline of the canoe. Something rose before me, and I caught it in my arms. There was a protesting squawk, and I tumbled into the boat, the black flamingo clasped to my bosom.

How we got there through the maze of tiny waterways I don't know, but in less than two hours a little lane opened out into a broad, strongly flowing channel, down which we paddled. By noon, we were on a river I recognized—the Miami—and the rest of our journey lay clear before us.

Noisy married the girl, of course. I should have shot him if he hadn't. You can't arrive at a thriving Southern

resort in your night clothes, accompanied by a lady, also in her night clothes, and a black flamingo, without compromising said lady, even when chaperoned by such a respectable old party as yours truly.

It was several weeks before it occurred to us to report the shipments of opium to the Federal authorities, and, since I couldn't remember any of the Chinese consignees' names, the investigation did not come to much. They easily evolved the theory that the stuff was floated ashore just beyond Miami, on the edge of the Everglades, and taken in by the Indians—a very clever scheme for distributing it in America, since Florida was the last place from which you would expect opium to be shipped. A year later, the island was even located, but found to be deserted. Whether the Chinamen got away, perished in the sea of saw grass, or were slain by the Seminoles, I don't know.

The black flamingo was on exhibition in the Museum of Natural History, and for some time attracted considerable attention. Then a meddling old fool of a scientist found that it was only dyed, not really black at all.

This nearly broke Noisy's heart, but about that date the first baby came to distract his attention. Esther insisted on naming it Richard.



SOMETHING ABOUT ANCESTRY

SHORTLY after Mr. Brandeis, who is a Jew, had been nominated to the Supreme Court of the United States by President Wilson, he was seated at dinner next to a well-known Washington society man who lives principally on the fact that a whole lot of his ancestors were prominent men. In the course of the evening he brought the conversation around to the subject of ancestry.

"While, of course," he said confidently to Mr. Brandeis, "I make no particular boast of it, my great-grandfather signed the Declaration of Independence."

"And," replied Mr. Brandeis quietly, looking the distinguished descendant straight in the eye, "while I make no particular boast of it, my great-grandfather signed the Ten Commandments."

That Mystery Ball

By Foxhall Williams

Author of "Bat Shy," "A Little Christmas Shopping," Etc.

A college-trained ball player demonstrates that there are other ways of winning ball games than merely "busting the old pill" and preventing the opposing stickers from following suit

IF Tommy Hance had broken into baseball—big-league baseball, that is—with one of the new sort of teams that are managed by new-style managers, things would have been very different. Nowadays, the big leagues are full of managers who never were any good as players themselves. All they can do is turn out winning teams. And they do it, some of them, in queer ways. They must have charts of their men, and it seems that some of them must make psychological tests during a spring-training trip. These are the managers who invite special writers to travel with their teams, and help to fix up the diagrams that show Ty Cobb's mental processes when he goes from first to third on a bunt, or steals third with two out.

But Hance, by the tricks of a smiling fate, landed with Pete Megrue. Pete couldn't pronounce psychology, and looked down on any ball player who could. He had his own explanation of the things Ty Cobb does. One of the special writers, seeking Pete's contribution to a psychological discussion of the game, got the explanation.

"Cobb?" said Pete. "Aw, that bird ain't human! How does he know when to steal and when to grab an extra base? He don't, son! He's just a second-story man. Think it out? Say—be reasonable! He don't have time to think! He's too busy breakin' up ball games!"

At that, Pete had a lot of theories about the game. They kept the Kites up in the race, too, though they hadn't ever won a pennant for him. They were pretty good theories, and they had the merit of permitting brevity in outlining them.

"The way to win ball games," said Pete, "is to bust the old pill! That, and havin' your own pitchers keep the other fellows from doin' it to you. When you get a man on first, and need one run to tie or lead, sacrifice. If there's a man out, the man on first ought to get a long lead and steal. When a pitcher's wild, wait him out. When you're hittin', bust the first ball."

A simple code, and one that wasn't complicated very much in actual practice, either. Pete knew all the old tricks, too; he imparted them to his players. His men knew that it was good form to kick a loose ball if they came within reach of it when they were sliding. Also, they were educated to understand the effect of a sudden outburst from the bench at a critical moment in a game, and to know that a young and nervous pitcher sometimes loses control under scientific handling from the coaching lines. But if any one had told Pete that these things had to do with psychology, he would have been profanely skeptical.

Even though the Kites hadn't won any pennants in Pete's time, they had done pretty well. They were in the

running most years, and they drew good crowds, especially at home. They were in one of the cities that weren't quite big enough for two teams, so there was no competition, and the club was a sort of gold mine, in a modest way, for John C. Collier, who owned about five-sixths of the stock. John C. wasn't really a baseball man. He was interested in a lot of other things. Civic pride had got him into the game, years before, when the Kites were in a bad way. He had taken over the club and the league franchise to keep the city from losing its ball club. He hadn't really expected to make money; the success of the club, after he got old Pete Megrue for manager, had been the pleasantest sort of surprise for him.

He let Pete strictly alone in the handling of the team, as a rule. But Tommy Hance was one of his protégés. Tommy was a native of the town. He had gone to an Eastern college for an engineering course, and he had come home with a diploma and a reputation as a college pitcher. He wasn't quite good enough to attract the big-league scouts, or else there was some other reason for his being overlooked. At any rate, the only professional offer Tommy got, rather to his surprise, was from a minor-league team. That disgusted him, and he turned it down. But he did want to play league baseball for a few years. He needed the money, for family reasons, and a ball player, if he is good, can earn—and collect—a whole lot more money than a young engineer.

And so, after Tommy had waited around for a while, to give the big-league lightning a fair chance to strike him, he went to John C. Collier and asked him, flatly, for a chance with the Kites. The sheer nerve of this was probably what made for success. Collier snorted, first; then he grinned.

"I'll tell Megrue to give you a try-out," he said. "But I'll tell you this,

Tommy—you ought to go to some one who's got more pull with Megrue than I've ever had!"

John C. Collier was as good as his word. He sent a note to Megrue. And then he went to Europe, on business. Baseball, as has been said, wasn't his chief interest. He never did devote much of his time to his ball club, and he could be away a whole season without any particular effect on the destinies of the Kites. Clem Ryder, the club secretary, and Megrue, between them, attended to all the business there was.

There had been some delay about that note. It wasn't delivered to Megrue, anyhow, until after Collier had gone away. So the manager couldn't follow his instinct to demand explanations. He took the request to give young Hance a trial more seriously than he would have done if the thing hadn't been so utterly unprecedented. Pete was in a bad humor, anyhow, when he got the note; the Kites had just succeeded in dropping five of their last six games, and Pete had sworn, after the last defeat, that he was managing a boneyard, not a baseball team. He went to Ryder, with fire in his eyes.

"What's the big idea?" he wanted to know. "Am I managin' the club, or am I not? If I'm to be interfered with like this——"

Ryder was a diplomat, like all his clan. A man who can hold down a job as secretary of a big-league ball club would be on the preferred list for ambassadorial jobs, if the department of state knew its business.

"Hard luck, old sport," he said, after he had run over Collier's note. "Still, he's only asking you to give this bird a try-out. It doesn't say anything about keeping him on the pay roll."

"I guess I wasn't born yesterday," muttered Pete. "I know what this means. Who is this Hance? Where'd he ever play?"

"I'm beginning to place him," said.

Ryder, who had been searching his memory. "He must be old John P. Hance's boy. His dad died a while ago, and he and the boss were pretty thick. And—yes—this kid pitched for his college team in the East. You'd better give him the once over at that, Pete. Shouldn't wonder if the boss would be plumb tickled to see him make good.

"A colleger!" There was supreme contempt in Pete's tone. One might have gathered, and correctly, that he didn't believe in the higher education of ball players. As a matter of fact, it was his theory that the proper mixture of aggressiveness and baseball knowledge he looked for in his players was to be found only in those who had been graduated from the sand lots, and had worked their way up to the big leagues through the rough going of the bush.

"Well, you needn't knock a man just because he went to college," suggested Ryder. "There are some pretty fair ball players that did it. Eddie Collins, for instance, and Matty. And Fred Tenney—I've heard you say he was the best first baseman you ever saw —"

"Oh, sure! There's collegers that can play ball, after they've forgotten the rah-rah stuff!" said Pete biting. "And every once in a while you find a left-hander that ain't a nut, or a guy that's born with six toes, too. Well, I'm being paid to obey orders, I guess. Tell this bird to report as soon as we get back from Dee-troit, Clem."

The Kites didn't distinguish themselves on the trip, and Pete brooded on his wrongs. By the time the club got back, he had convinced himself that he was under orders from the big boss to make a pitcher of Hance, regardless of his merits. His mental state wasn't such as to lead him to remember that Collier never had interfered with him,

and was not, therefore, likely to do it at this late stage. He was so sore and disgruntled that he rather enjoyed making the thing look as bad as possible. He took Johnny Dines, his shortstop and field captain, into his confidence, and through Dines the whole team learned that Hance was to be taken on as a pet of the owner. The Kites, naturally, reflected Pete's theories. They didn't include any college men, and they had no abiding affection for such creatures. It may be guessed that they were not sitting up nights to prepare addresses of welcome for Hance.

Tommy was no fool. He hadn't talked to Megrue for five minutes, on the day he reported at the home park for morning practice, before he understood the manager's attitude toward him. And an equal period in the clubhouse was enough to show him that the players didn't like him, and wouldn't be at any pains to make him think they did.

Pete thought he was being subtle. His method of putting Hance where he belonged was to be painfully polite, as Pete understood politeness.

"Too bad you've got to break in with such a bunch of roughnecks, Mr. Hance," he said. "But you'll have to make allowances for the boys. Most of them never got any farther than the eighth grade. They couldn't explain why they make base hits—they ain't got education enough. And you'd be surprised to find how many of them are ignorant about important things, like picture galleries and grand opera. I expect you'll find it pretty hard to put up with their rough ways. They ain't anything but ball players."

"I guess that's what they're paid to be," said Hance, with a grin. "I never heard that liking grand opera was any particular good to a ball player. Me, I'm glad that's so, too. The last time I went to the opera I fell asleep in the second act, and disgraced myself."

This might have mollified Pete, but didn't. He thought it was condescension.

"He's trying to make me feel he knows it ain't my fault I've not got none of the finer sensibilities," he told Johnny Dines. "Like as not, he'll be eatin' peas with his knife to make the rest of us feel at home, Johnny."

"Urr!" growled Dines. "We'll show him where he gets off if he tries to pull any of that stuff."

They did. The trouble was, of course, after that start, that the Kites simply assumed that every word, every gesture, every movement of Hance's, was intended to demonstrate his superiority and his charitable desire to keep them from sensing it. If he used slang, they lifted their eyebrows. If he betrayed a touch of human friendliness, they misinterpreted it. Not fully understanding the cause of all this, Hance was first puzzled, and then angry. There were moments, in his first week with the club, when he was tempted to quit. But he wasn't that sort.

"I'll show this bunch of lowbrows up!" he said to himself, his jaw sticking out at a combative angle. "They started out to get my goat—and I can see the dear thing browsing on tin cans in the next lot! It's up to me to send theirs to join it, and then we'll all call them back and be good. But nix on letting them get away with that sort of stuff."

And so, as soon as he had made up his mind as to just what the Kites were trying to do to him, Hance changed his tactics. He stopped being humble and conciliatory. He lifted his voice whenever he heard an argument, and he had an opinion about everything that was discussed, on the bench, or in the clubhouse. He abandoned slang, and talked, with much painful effort, in English that was pure and precise. He bought the collected works on baseball of Hugh Fullerton, and began to quote

statistics bearing upon the length of the lead a pitcher might safely allow a base runner to take.

Meanwhile, of course, he did some pitching. He pitched to the batters in morning practice, and he spent hours steaming a ball into the big mitt of old Carter, the veteran catcher, who coached the Kites' pitchers.

"I suppose they taught you that motion in college," said Megrue, with infinite contempt. "You don't tell the batter anything except just what you're going to pitch with it! You've got one wind-up for your slow ball, and another for your curve, and another for the fast one!"

This was true, as Hance recognized, and he did his best to overcome a fault that he shared with most young and inexperienced pitchers. But it wasn't his only fault. The work against the batters of the Kites demonstrated that better than any amount of theoretical coaching could have done. Man after man came up, took a toe hold, and hammered the choicest balls he pitched to the far corners of the park. They did that to the regular pitchers when they took a turn at this sort of practice, too, but Hance knew the difference. The regulars were just lobbing the ball over, pitching, perhaps, to the weaknesses of the batters, but doing it easily, and without putting enough on the ball to tire their valuable arms. He, on the other hand, pitched just as hard against his teammates as he could. And he was hit in spite of that.

This was extremely trying to the soul, but, otherwise, the best thing that could have happened to him. It made him humble, though he was still too resentful to show that. He became convinced, gradually, that he was a false alarm, and that his college record didn't prove a thing. He learned the vast difference that there must always be between amateur and professional standards. And he decided, after three weeks or so,

that, as things stood, he never would be worth his salt to the Kites, or any other big-league team.

This wasn't true, and Pete reluctantly was beginning to suspect it. Pete knew good stuff when he saw it, no matter how raw the material might be. He was always reaching out into the bush and pulling in some recruit who had been ripening slowly under his eye. And from his own observation, as well as from what old Carter told him, he knew that Hance had the makings of a real pitcher about him.

"He needs experience," said the catcher. "I'd say you ought to plant him with a pretty fair Class B league, Pete. He'll get into a game once or twice a week, and get on to how to use the stuff he's got."

"Aw, maybe," conceded Pete. "But suppose he's got a pull with the boss—as he has? Suppose I got orders to make a pitcher for the Kites out of him? I can't farm him out—like as not he'd make a kick and say I hadn't given him a square deal."

"I pass," said Carter, shrugging his shoulders. "That's your end of it, Pete. All I'm here for is to tell you how he looks to me."

"I'm going to put him in a game," said Pete. "We can't win no pennant, anyhow, without the Blues and the Eagles get into a railway wreck or make a mistake between their hotel and a typhoid-fever hospital some night."

"He'll be murdered," said Carter judicially.

"I should worry," replied Pete.

A dark plot, this. Megrue knew as well as Carter what any team in the league could do to Hance. But it would clear his skirts. He could point to the records when John C. came back and demanded explanations. All of which Tommy guessed when Pete told him, one morning, that he was to pitch that afternoon. Managers, it may be remarked, are not in the habit of telling

pitchers until warming-up time that they are to work. Veterans, with a regular turn in the box, know it, of course. But it is not the best thing in the world for a young pitcher to know ahead of time that he is to pitch in a certain game. It doesn't add to his confidence.

So Hance, after four or five hours in which to think things over, went in against the Eagles and pitched exactly two innings. In the first, he retired the side on three roaring flies that the outfielders pulled in after long runs. But in the second he was hit safely ten times, yielding a total of nine runs. If Pete hadn't sent him to the clubhouse after that, the assembled reporters in the press box would have assassinated him. Hance departed, passing under the right-field bleachers to a running fire of abuse that turned his face brick red, and made his hair stand up.

Once more he wanted to quit—which was what Megrue had expected. If the manager had come to him then with a proposition to send him to the minors for schooling, he would probably have jumped at it. But Megrue, with his obsession about the way John C. Collier had interfered by ordering him to give Hance a trial, wouldn't do it. He wanted to force Hance to give up. And he came to the clubhouse, after the seventh inning, with a sneer on his face. Hance had just finished dressing.

"Well," said Pete. "Some different from a college team, the Eagles—hey?"

"Some," agreed Tommy quietly, but with a stiffening of the muscles of that combative jaw of his.

"Y'know," Pete went on thoughtfully, "there's times I think havin' an education ain't such an awful help to a ball player. He's apt to be thinkin' so much about books an' things that he ain't got time to figure on playin' the game. An' sometimes it seems to make a man a quitter."

He looked straight at Hance when he said that. For one red-tinted moment

Tommy nearly took up the challenge. But then he got control of himself. Or nearly.

"I don't notice this ball club winning any pennants, just the same," he said. "I'll tell you one thing, Megrue. Pass me up—admit I'm a rotten pitcher. It's true just the same, that a bunch of sand lotters like this can get just so far, no matter how good they are on the field—and it's because they don't think."

"Oh, is that so?" said Pete, delighted. "I suppose you'll hit the trail for home now and study out just what happened to you to-day, and fix it so it won't happen again, hey?"

"I might," said Hance. His eyes were wandering now, and there was a distinctly thoughtful look in them. He had just hit upon an idea.

"Yeh—and pigs'll be flying, some day, too," said Megrue. "I'll give you another chance, when the fans have forgotten about the way you blew up to-day, or when we're on the road, maybe. You're none of my hiring, and I'll obey orders till the boss countermands them. But if you want to quit now, you can do it without hurtin' my feelin's any, believe me!"

"I'll quit when I get my release." snapped Hance. "And I won't ask for it, either!"

At which they left it. Hance went home. And if Megrue had seen what he did when he got there, he would have been vastly amused.

On the way home, Hance stopped at a sporting-goods store and bought a dozen baseballs. At home he evaded his family and went out into the garden. At its far end was a fence, recently whitewashed. Upon its virgin surface Hance marked out a certain space, and this space he covered with a light layer of lampblack. This he tested by throwing a ball; the impact left a gray space, which marked the exact spot where the ball had struck. He nodded, well satisfied, and went to his room.

Until dinner he studied intently certain treatises on the science of physics that had lain unopened since his sophomore year in college. After dinner, with those books and much fair, white paper, which he covered with apparently meaningless sums and formulæ, he worked until after midnight. Once or twice he chuckled. And he went to bed, smiling, at last, and slept without a dream of that nightmare of an inning against the Eagles to disturb his sleep. The nagging of an alarm clock woke him soon after dawn, and, while the rest of the household slept on, he went into the garden and pitched ball after ball against his blackened diagram. He could have pitched many more balls than he did, had he not examined the mark left by each one, and jotted down its position on a copy of his wall diagram that he had made.

He ate a remarkably hearty breakfast, and departed blithely for the ball park. He whistled cheerfully as he dressed, unmindful of the unveiled sneers of the Kites.

"He's been studying it all out," said Johnny Dines, in a stage whisper. "Y'see, it's this way: Them Eagles ain't got no education, no more than us. So they didn't know they didn't have any license to hit the stuff he was servin' them. I tell you, Scotty, it's tough when you have to go out of your own class!"

Except for that sort of thing, however, no one paid any attention to him. Megrue, coming in a little late, stared at him.

"Hello—you still around?" he said. And that was all. Hance was left to chase flies in the outfield; Pete didn't call on him to pitch to the batters, even. But, though he understood the purpose of this neglect, it didn't seem to worry him. And he surprised Carter by his cheerfulness when the old catcher, taking pity on him, sought him out.

"Come on behind the stand in the

shade, and pitch a few to me," he said. He looked Hance over with an appraising eye. "Not goin' to quit, are you, son?"

"Only by request," grinned Hance.

"H'm!" said Carter. "Say, kid—I admire nerve, all right, but you don't want to be too brash. You ain't had the squarest sort of deal with this ball club, but you are pretty rotten. Didn't you get on to that when they hopped on you yesterday?"

"Rotten?" said Hance. "Say—if I was a banana, the board of health would get after any one that tried to sell me!"

"Uh-yeh!" grunted Carter, honestly surprised. "Got rattled, didn't you? Forgot what little I'd told you, hey? Kept putting them over in the middle?"

"I was afraid to try the corners," admitted Hance. "I knew they had something on me. But——"

He stopped, on the verge of confidences. And Carter, after a long stare, tossed him a ball.

"All right," he said. "Let's see what your control's like to-day."

For ten minutes the ball went back and forth, without comment from Carter. Then, suddenly, he had to reach out for a ball, and the next moment to throw up his mitt to keep a curve from breaking his teeth—he wore no mask, of course, for this sort of work.

"Hey—what you puttin' on that ball?" he asked.

"Nothing extra," said Tommy innocently. "Must be the wind—it does queer things here, coming through the seats."

"Huh?" said Carter, staring at him. "D'you get that out of a book?"

"Sure," said Tommy.

But after ten minutes of pitching, Carter quit.

"My hands ain't what they used to be," he said apologetically. "Say—I don't know what you're pulling off here, son. I don't know that I want to, either. But, if you can do that right

along——" He paused significantly. "Can you?" he asked.

"I don't get you," said Tommy, with the bland eyes of innocence. "What's the idea, anyhow?"

"You don't need to talk if you don't like," said Carter, offended. "But you don't need to hold out on me, neither. I never ragged you like the rest of the boys about your bein' a collegger. Me, I'm strong for that college stuff. I got a boy of my own, an' he's goin' to one his own self when he's old enough, unless the bank where I've been stowin' my pay checks away busts on me."

"Well, if he's going to be a pitcher, you tell him to study ballistics and wind resistance," advised Tommy.

"I'll get you to write that down," said Carter. Then he chuckled.

"Just thinkin' something about old Pete," was the only explanation of that chuckle that he would vouchsafe, however.

But it didn't need much explaining when he had occasion to repeat it, a week or so later, when Tommy Hance got his second chance to pitch in a game—this time against the Blues. For this time he pitched the sort of game that Pete Megrue and every other ball player or wise baseball reporter looks for, not from a recruit, but from a wise, old veteran. He was hit fairly hard—but the hits came with the bases empty. He tightened up whenever a score was threatened, and he won his game with the two runs the Kites gave him in the first inning, holding the Blues, who were leading the league, to one run in the ninth inning.

"Luck," said Pete Megrue disgustedly.

"Luck—nothin'," said Carter, beside him on the bench. "Look at the way they're swingin' when they need a hit to drive a run home! An' watch that ball—there's somethin' on it I never saw before!"

Of certain of the balls that Tommy

pitched that was true. Not all of them, by any means. A good deal of the time he was simply pitching ordinary good baseball. His control was good; he was cutting the corners with his curves, so that the batters were in the hole with called strikes, or as a result of hitting late at a breaking ball, and so sending up fouls that arched back over the stand. But three times Heston, the clean-up hitter of the Blues, came to bat with a man on third. Twice, when a long fly would have meant a run, he stood and watched the umpire's hand go up three times. The third time he struck out on a ball that hit the dust at his feet as he lunged for it.

"Say—what did you do to that ball?" he asked Hance, in frank admiration. "I'll swear there was a double curve—it dropped after it started to rise!"

"That's right!" said the umpire, professionally interested, too. "That's some break on that ball!"

But Hance only grinned.

"Well, you got by to-day," said Megrue grudgingly. "Went home and studied some after that other time, did you?"

"That's just what I did," said Tommy.

"Huh!" said Megrue. "I suppose you'll be tellin' me you learned how to pitch with your college education?"

"I might tell you so—because it happens to be true," said Hance.

"Aw—tell it to Sweeney!" growled Megrue. "I can tell you how you won that game—you had a horseshoe in your glove, that's how! Better not get too cocky, though—wait till you've won a few more games."

It was so ordered. But by the time Tommy had beaten every team in the league, and had kept the Eagles, authors of his previous humiliation, swinging wildly through a hot afternoon, even Megrue had to admit that some miracle had turned his collegian into a good pitcher. Luck might account for one

victory; it had no bearing on a string of seven, all by low scores, in pitchers' battles.

As to his mystery ball, the testimony was unanimous. He had, beyond all question, a curve that broke twice. Starting as an inshoot, it would break to the outside; a drop would sometimes rise, and be transformed into a perfectly good strike just as the batter had decided that it was too low. Umpires, opposing batsmen, and Frank McGann, who was Tommy's catcher, all agreed as to this. It was against all tradition and the laws of nature, but—it was true.

Then, abruptly, in the middle of a game, Tommy discarded that mystery ball. It didn't make any difference. He had his control, now, so that he could put the ball where he pleased, and he had the supreme and unshakable confidence that few pitchers ever attain, and only one in a thousand in their first big-league season.

That settled matters for Megrue.

"I pass," he said. "Hance—come through, for the love of Mike! How d'you get that ball? You got by without it to-day—I've got to hand it to you for that. You're some pitcher!"

"Fair enough," said Hance. "Look here."

He held out his glove, after a moment's manipulation. In the palm was a small piece of sandpaper.

"Well?" said Megrue.

Tommy took a ball, rubbed it a moment on his glove, as a pitcher does with every ball before he delivers it, and handed it over.

"See that rough spot?" he said. "You know how you get a curve—give the ball a spin, according to how you want it to break. Well, that rough spot upsets the whole wind resistance. You can't be just sure of what it's going to do—but neither can the batter! It's like a spitter—only about eight times more so."

"Gee!" said Pete. "How'd you dope that out?"

He sat dazed, while Tommy plunged into a highly technical explanation of such portions of the science of ballistics as applied to the case in point.

"They use that and a lot more when they're figuring on the trajectory of a shell from a rifled gun," he explained kindly. "That's how they get the range, so that a man can fire a gun over a range of hills and be sure it's going to hit a spot he can't see at all. I just applied my—college education."

This happened in the clubhouse. Megrue scratched his head, then called upon Clem Ryder.

"Say—I want you to wire Fred Ames and a couple of other scouts to come in from the bush and go dig me up a dozen assorted collegers to report September 1st!" he said. "Tell him I want guys that got good marks, too!"

This was the *amende honorable*! Then he turned to Tommy.

"Can you show Rube Jenkins and those other pitchers of mine how to use that ball?" he demanded earnestly. "Say—I see where we tear this league wide open!"

"Not on that ball, you won't," said Hance. "Did you notice Billy Bevins call for my glove? I got rid of that bit of sandpaper—but there's one umpire that's a fox! He's on to that ball, and he'll put the league wise, too. That's why I cut it out. I'm going to get by on straight stuff from now on."

"I guess you will," said Pete Megrue. He shook his head. "Say—any guy that can dope out a thing like that—Listen—you learned that stuff in college, maybe, but they never taught you how to use it! You're all right—but if you'd started in the lots, you'd have been cutting up world's series checks for three or four seasons by this time!"

Nevertheless, the scouts of the Kites make their rounds of the college games regularly in these days!



A LAMENTATION FROM THE HEART

DURING one of the early spring days, when languor was in the air, and the early afternoon brought drowsiness to those who sat indoors, the Supreme Court of the United States, august, begowned, and gloomy, sat in the ancient judgment seat and delivered lore and learning regarding the laws of the land.

One of the justices, affixing his glasses to his patrician nose and grasping a document that looked like that which will be read when Gabriel blows his justly celebrated trump, began to deliver the opinion of the court on a certain case. This matter of law, having been fought with wolflike ferocity and bulldog tenacity through all the law courts, was about to receive its quietus. It concerned, was involved in, touched on, and appertained to, various complicated details of the plumbing business.

A fly droned across the room. So did the voice of immutable justice. For three-quarters of an hour the judge read, explaining all the threads, joints, elbow joints, fixtures, and other intricacies of that craft which has as its business the conducting of water through leaden imprisonment. There was nothing left unmentioned regarding plumbing. It was hot and drowsy weather. Still the plumbing discourse continued.

Suddenly a man seated in the back of the solemn chamber whispered to his friend:

"When they put that man on the bench, what an excellent plumber was lost to the trade!"

Snowstorm

By H. H. Knibbs

Author of "The Singing Girl of Yuma," "Magic of the Blue Mesa," Etc.

What befell a cow-puncher who turned sheep-herder and got the sheepman's point of view despite his inborn prejudice

"A puncher broke
Is a puncher woke
To findin' a job, right soon,
Or goin' afoot like a blame' coyote,
And eatin' from off the moon."

AND Snowstorm so informed the universe, which consisted visibly at the time of seven board shacks, a dobe saloon, and a tin-can pile.

"Bet my hoss agin' the town a greaser runs the irrigatin' palace," ventured the cowboy, addressing himself. He dug the lean pinto he bestrode in the ribs, and ambled toward the dobe. Dismounting, he swaggered into the inner darkness, blinked, and finally, to the astonishment of the host of the dobe, exclaimed succinctly: "I lost."

"Lost what?" queried O'Leary, sizing up the puncher.

"Me bet. Take the hoss, as you represent the only human bein' in sight, and I reckon you own the town or you wouldn't be here."

O'Leary grinned. "And what was the bet, if I'm not steppin' on your foot by askin', mebb'y?"

"That a greaser run this irrigatin' plant. I was bettin' with a friend of mine."

"A good friend?" asked O'Leary, again grinning.

"Onct." And Snowstorm eyed the scant array of bottles with a scientific eye.

O'Leary nodded knowingly. This

was not the first puncher out of a job that had drifted into his place. He knew the brand. But he gave Snowstorm a second and surreptitious glance. The Angora chaps that the puncher wore despite the heat were snow-white, glossy, and the belt was mounted with engraved silver conchas. Rapidly, O'Leary calculated their value at a liberal discount on the probable cost and resale. "Have some soothin' sirup?" he said, and fitted the proffer to the word, so that Snowstorm was outside of several fingers of whisky before he quite realized it.

"I ought to be put to sleep, at that," said the puncher, leaning on the bar and sighing with physical content. "Quit a good job with the Honeymoon outfit 'count of differin' about rigs with the chief. Plumb foolish—but I'm here."

To this, O'Leary said nothing, but again eyed the chaps, this time a shade longer than Snowstorm had kept his eye on the array of bottles back of the bar. "That's me," said the puncher. "My reg'lar hoss was a white Invo County cayuse. Him and these," he added, shaking a leg, "earnt me the name, which accordin' to the Y. W. P. Q. rules I should 'a' let loose when I come in. I'm Snowstorm—and south of the hottest hole this side of the other place, at that."

"Meanin' Yuma?"

"Take your choice, draw, and we'll

stab the kitty onct more," chanted Snowstorm, grinning.

"Haven't had a game since—lemme see—since Skim Hopper rode over; three weeks and more."

"Your elbow sure must be stiff," said Snowstorm. "Where's the rest of the folks?"

"Ridin'," said O'Leary, eying Snowstorm keenly. But the puncher only nodded indifferently. Who they were riding for, or what they were riding after, was of no interest to him. Or, if it were of interest, he was too wise to show it.

"Tie your cayuse and rest your saddle," said O'Leary, with large hospitality.

"What? Tie him?" queried Snowstorm, frowning. "Say, he'd lean ag'inst yore hitchin' rail till he bruk it—sure thing! He's tied—to his shadder. Anyhow, he's yourn."

"Goin' to quit punchin'?"

"I've quit," sighed Snowstorm. "And I ain't seen nothin' to punch 'cept horned toads and lizards since I lit out from the Honeymoon."

"Didn't notice a corral 'way up that draw to the left 'bout a mile back?" asked O'Leary.

"Nope. Guess I was watchin' me hoss to see where he was goin' to fall. He takes spells of settin' down and thinkin', too."

"That so? Well, it don't pay to think too hard sometimes," said the saloon keeper pointedly.

Snowstorm refused to rise to the bait, and O'Leary, boss of the rustlers of Animus Bend, was satisfied that his guest had no other thought save for his own interests. Straightway, O'Leary brought out the cards, came from behind the bar, and pulled up a chair opposite Snowstorm. "Shake 'em loose," he said, proffering the pack.

"They're shook," said Snowstorm. "What's the ante, and what's the limit?"

I'm broke—which ain't no spring news to you, I take it."

"Ten—against them chaps," said O'Leary, cutting for deal.

"Ten's no good to me here," said Snowstorm, "only to hand back to you. But I ain't no expurgated accountant to figure small stuff. You're on."

"So is them chaps," laughed O'Leary.

"And I'm goin' to keep a settin' on 'em——" Then Snowstorm changed his mind quickly, rose, and began to shake his legs out of the chaps. "Just to show you I'm right in, me extensions," he said. As the chaps slid to the floor, O'Leary saw for the first time the butt of Snowstorm's revolver, and noted that the gun was hung low and handy.

"Suits me," said Snowstorm, grinning.

O'Leary dealt.

Four hours later, Snowstorm rose, gave a final flip to the card he held, and sauntered to the bar. O'Leary followed and proffered refreshment. Snowstorm drank, shook his head, and started for the doorway.

"Long session for a short stake," said O'Leary. "But I ain't no hog. I'll put up a five ag'inst that gun."

"When I'm planted," said Snowstorm, turning. "There's more earnin' power in a gun—handled right, when a fella's broke than most folks would think."

"And you got your hoss yet," said O'Leary.

"You said it all when you said 'yet,' pardner. You wasn't expectin' me to leave here with much more'n recommend for a dum fool and me nacheral jeans, I take it. Well, anyhow, I give you a run for that ten."

"Had me bad forty bucks one spell," said O'Leary.

"I was after the whole works," said Snowstorm, brightening at the reflex of the vanished idea. "I was workin'

them chaps to get all you had—booze, dobe, and right of way. But old Dame Fortune was sure out flirtin' with the other fella. I ain't kickin'."

Realizing that he had done a good day's business, O'Leary was inclined to be charitable. Moreover, it was lonesome at the Bend just then, and Snowstorm was not indifferent to repartee, such as it was. Nor was he indifferent to the meal they ate that evening. It was a long, dusty ride to the next town. But three days later the puncher grew tired of O'Leary's talk, the dobe, and the sight of his chaps hanging behind the bar. So he saddled up and rode south, humming his song, which held for him no direct satire, but rather a tinge of humor. Toward night, he drifted into a sheep camp, parleyed in Mexican, and ate tortillas, mutton, and frijoles, and drank three cups of hair-raising coffee. Possibly it was the coffee that inspired him, perhaps it was reason. In any event, next morning he helped head off a stampede of the sheep and drifted along with the band, indignant with himself that he, Snowstorm, erstwhile exceedingly active puncher of longhorns, should be herding sheep with two unwashed and unkempt Mexicans. His familiarity with their language and habits helped him to win their approval, and they were quite as much astounded that a puncher should take to herding sheep as the puncher was himself.

It was at the Nine Mile Crossing that Snowstorm scented trouble. In the distance he saw three riders coming toward the band. Too stubborn to ride into the brush until they had passed, he dogged along in the dust, still humming his interminable ditty. At the crossing, the sheep drank. Then, without warning, the three riders were among them. Snowstorm had never appreciated the sheep-and-cattle question to its full extent until that moment. The sheep broke and ran.

Many were drowned in the deeper water below. The herders grew frantic, running to check the band, and the two sheep dogs labored mightily. Snowstorm sat his horse and eyed the three riders. Suddenly his face brightened. Spurring forward, he rode up to the leader of the marauders. And "What's the excitement?" he queried slowly.

Snowstorm's erstwhile chief, Andy Baird, reined up and gazed at the puncher. "Who the—— Boys, if it ain't Snowstorm—without the snow!"

The other two riders pulled their dripping horses from the ford and joined their chief. All three sat gazing at their former companion. Snowstorm, eying them beneath ragged brows, bit his finger nails. "Yes, it's me. Take away the snow and you know what's left," he added as an afterthought.

One of the riders laughed. "Sheep-herdin'," he muttered to his companion, but Snowstorm heard.

"Sheep-herdin' is correc'," said Snowstorm. "Got any kick?"

"Why, Snow's talkin' business," asserted the other rider.

"I sure am. What's the excitement? These here sheep don't belong to me, but I'm with 'em—I said it. What's the excuse for stampedin' the bunch?"

"Hear him," said the rider nearest Baird.

"And listen," said Snowstorm. "You can't hear without listenin, Johnny."

Baird swung his leg over the saddle horn. "Snow, if you ain't loco, come out of it. Reckon you never stampeded sheep."

"Right—and I did, when I was all for the longhorns. That's different."

"Never knowed losin' a pair of chaps'd make a sheep-herder out of a puncher," said the other rider.

"Never did," said Bard. "Well, let's fan it. I guess the next bunch'll keep

to the east and quit fordin' at this crossin'."

"So that's it, eh?" queried Snowstorm. "Well, bein' as things is, I got to call your hand, Andy."

Baird reined round, facing the puncher. "You joshin'?" he asked.

"Nope. Just changin' my opinion about some folks."

"So? Talk American."

Snowstorm flushed. The shot hit him squarely. "Your stampedin' them sheep is just darn meanness," he asserted. "They wasn't harmin' nobody."

Baird laughed unpleasantly. "And what is that to you?"

"It's three meals a day and a place to sleep," he said gravely. "I was never up agin' it like this till you fired me for tellin' you a center-fire rig was only fit for circus ridin' and not for ropin' steers. I got the laugh on you and you took the next excuse to let me go, you bein' the only center-fire man in the outfit. I ain't sore because I'm fired, but I'm sore because why I was fired. But that ain't nothin' to do with runnin' down them sheep. I say you don't run 'em ag'in—while I'm here."

"We don't, eh?" queried Baird, who had taken from the puncher about all the insult he could stand. "Come on, Johnny!"

Snowstorm spurred close to the foreman. "I'm ridin' with you this trip," he said.

Baird whirled, and his hand went to his hip. His gun was half out of its holster when Snowstorm fired twice. The foreman toppled from his horse, sprawled in the ford, and turned over. The puncher Johnny hesitated, glanced at Snowstorm's face, and, setting spurs to his cayuse, rode over the hill. The other rider threw a shot at Snowstorm, but missed. Then he, too, spurred up the trail and out of sight.

Snowstorm dismounted and dragged

the body of Baird to the shore. He examined the wounds and shook his head. "All over but the lynchin'," he muttered. "He had his gun out afore I fired; but that won't do me no good with them fellas as witnesses. I reckon I need a real hoss right now."

O'Leary was standing in the doorway of the dobe at Animus Bend when a distant horseman appeared on the horizon. O'Leary studied the tiny figure, and finally retired to the seclusion of his bar. An hour later, Snowstorm, astride a large bay, rode up and dismounted. Before O'Leary could get to his gun, Snowstorm had him covered. "I want them chaps," was all that the puncher said. And he got them.

An hour later, two riders from the Honeymoon outfit rode up to the dobe. O'Leary was only too willing to give them the information they sought, but did not expect to find so soon. They disappeared in the dusk, riding south. "Don' know why," said the one called Johnny, "but I reckon he'll head right back for the sheep. It's like him to do that."

"You're 'way off," said the other rider. "But we'll fan it down that way and lay for him if we can cut his trail."

"We *got* to get him," said Johnny. "What would the boys say?"

"Ask yourself," growled the other. "You had the best chanct to beef him."

An early moon showed tracks of a hard-urged horse in the sand. Johnny pulled up and dismounted. "Water hole's 'bout a mile ahead," he asserted. His companion grunted.

Circling the low ridge of sand ahead, they made for the water hole. At the base of the ridge surrounding it, they reined up and crawled to the top. About a hundred yards beyond, Snowstorm was just mounting the bay.

Johnny's companion pulled his gun, sky-lined Snowstorm as he gained the saddle, and fired. Snowstorm pitched forward, grabbed at his horse's mane, and slid to the ground. Johnny looked at his companion and gestured toward the distant figure. "Mebby he's foxin'," he whispered. And, crawling back to their horses, they mounted and rode for the dobe.

Next morning, as the sheep drifted north toward the water hole, the grizzled little Mexican herder was surprised to see them veer and break just at the edge of the water. He sent his dogs ahead and called to his companion. Together they approached the white blur that had frightened the sheep. Snowstorm lay face upward, his white chaps streaked with red from the blood he had coughed up as he had tried to rise and get to the horse. The herders

gazed down upon him and crossed themselves. Then the elder one knelt and looked hard in Snowstorm's face. Rising, he nodded to his companion. Together they dug a shallow trench and covered the body of Snowstorm with stones. Then they made a rude cross, binding the bits of greasewood together with a sheepskin thong.

As the sheep passed O'Leary's adobe, the saloon keeper noticed a pair of white chaps, oddly streaked with red, slung across one of the burro packs. He came from the doorway and spoke to the herders. Five pounds of sugar, twice as many of flour, and two dollars, and the chaps were again hanging back of O'Leary's bar.

"And there's a story about them chaps," he will tell you should you happen to have the misfortune to be delayed at Animus Bend.



"MR. JOHNSON, OF NEW ENGLAND"

MR. JOHNSON, of New England," known over the length and breadth of that territory, is and has been for many years special messenger and porter to the president of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad Co. That he is a descendant of a former native of Africa does not detract from his importance nor his ambition. As messenger in carrying important papers to and from President Charles S. Mellen and the directors' room, John Johnson became—in his own estimation—a most important unit in the body of great men who managed and controlled the traffic of New England. In speaking of the board of directors or any action of Mr. Mellen, Johnson always spoke in the plural, as: "We will hold the next board meeting in New York"; "We intend to go to Boston to-morrow."

Before the death of J. G. Parker, sometime secretary to the president and afterward secretary of the company, Johnson became very jealous of the secretary. This was evidenced on more than one occasion. The instance which gave "Mr. Johnson" his now popular title was an occasion when Mr. Mellen had been called suddenly to New York. Some of his codirectors, en route from Boston to New York, stopped off at New Haven in hope of seeing and consulting with the president. The entrance to Mr. Mellen's suite of offices was closed, but a carefully hand-printed card of four lines announced:

THE PRESIDENT IS IN NEW YORK.
PARKER IS OUT TO LUNCH.
MR. JOHNSON WILL BE BACK
IN A FEW MINUTES.

The directors had sufficient curiosity to wait to discover the identity of "Mr. Johnson."

Partakers of Glory

By Fleta Campbell Springer

Trust Sandville for a little excitement at election time. Half of the wearing apparel, most of the personal property, and a good part of the town's real estate changes hands every time a new President of these United States is chosen

IF ever a town needed publicity, Sandville was that town; and yet when the thing happened which might have put the name of Sandville in every newspaper in the land, and set men talking about it from one end of the Territory to the other, Sandville itself took pains to suppress it. For towns, like men, however much they may need advertising, can ill afford to be laughed at. Even now you will find no one in Sandville to tell you the story.

It was in the days when the territory was still "The Territory," and the hardiest railroad had ventured no farther than the border towns.

And Sandville, truthfully, if unpoetically, named, lay just forty miles off the path of progress, forty miles from the nearest railroad, forty miles from the nearest telegraph or telephone—uncivilized, unsung, unsought, it lay just forty miles out of the world.

Made up of those good-natured failures from everywhere who are the stuff of your true pioneers, and a handful of old slave negroes who walked through from Tennessee and the Carolinas, lured by the bright promises of a swindling colonization scheme and "free government land," Sandville acquired its traditions overnight, and fell, almost in a day, into habits of long standing.

A dull and monotonous life, you say? Ah, you have never lived in Sandville, else you would know that it was with difficulty that one escaped the press of

duties incumbent upon being a citizen of Sandville more than once or twice a year, and a great majority of the people never found the time at all.

Charley Doud, by far the most important person in town, was, like most men worth telling about, known less for himself than for his works. He was at once the Associated Press, the United States mail service, the delicatessen, telegraph, telephone, railroad, general-merchandise emporium, and information bureau of Sandville. He drove "the hack" to Kingfisher one day and back the next, and time was not within the memory of the inhabitants when he did not.

Charley himself, one crippled leg bent awkwardly up and back, and giving him, with his long crutch, a rickety effect, looked astonishingly like one of those ridiculous little jumping jacks set in motion by pulling a string; and from head to foot he was so covered with dust as to give him the appearance of having been created, like Adam, out of primeval earth—full grown, and, like Adam, of no specified age. Only his eyes, brown and bright as a deer's, and his amazing activity, convinced one that youth lingered somewhere within him.

And although Charley had his own one room and lean-to on the edge of town, and slept there, and presumably cooked his meals, on alternate nights, and though he was officially classed as a resident of Sandville, yet he held al-

ways himself aloof, detached, and his presence on the main street, jerking along on his high crutch, meant only that the hack had not yet gone out, or was in from a trip. Cast for a satisfactory rôle, he had no ambition to play any other, and Charley, without the hack, was incomplete as Phœbus Apollo without the Chariot of the Sun.

The hack was an ancient yellow buckboard, each of whose wheels appeared to hold a different idea of the direction the hack was to take, but all, in the end, following swiftly, in wobbly protest, after the flying ponies, two tough little buckskins, looking every minute as if they would jump clear of the big misfit harness. Charley had made a top of dingy brown canvas, stretched sketchily over wooden bows, not so much to keep the sun out as to keep the freight and passengers in.

And the essence of Charley's contract was speed. With Charley on the high seat, his long crutch beside him, his black snake singing out over the backs of the galloping ponies, trunks and boxes and mail bags, ice and fresh vegetables and Sears Roebuck catalogues piled to a perilous height behind, the canvas sides of the cover flapping and floating in the wind, and out of the swaying, dust-enveloped mass the heads of a couple of scared-looking drummers—it was a sight to make one cease wonder at the law of gravity, for something far less understandable held the thing together. Strangers came out with Charley, but looked for some other way to get back. Charley, the speed god, the Ben Hur of the West, the fastest, most reckless driver this side of anywhere.

The natives, taking such subtle hints as were involved in an initial ride with Charley, and caring somewhat for life and limb, had long since abandoned the hack for passenger service, and Charley went his way, touching only the

edge of the town, never taking sides or seeming to know there were sides to take, never entering into the life, except for that noteworthy once of which Sandville does not speak.

Now the chief occupation of Sandville was politics. Of course, there were a few versatile ones who managed to snatch enough time from that absorbing business to indulge in such unimportant side lines as blacksmithing, general merchandise, agricultural implements, and whisky, or even a little desultory farming. The town was known all over the territory as a hotbed of politics. All Sandville was literally divided into three parts—Democrats, Republicans, and babies under six months of age. Women's friendships were cemented and broken as politics decreed. School children played their games, arrayed Democrats against Republicans, quarreled their quarrels, and sustained the party feuds. Young love broke on the rock of political creeds, as in New England it broke on the rock of religions.

Yet there was about this obsession something abstract and fine, like the passion for art; the more distant the point at issue, the more intense the interest was. No man who had ears could stay overnight in Sandville, at election time, and believe that popular fallacy that Territories have no voice in presidential elections. A vote they might not have, but a voice they certainly had; and on the fourth of November, 1900, that voice rose to a pitch that was almost hysterical, and echoed long in the unwilling ears of Democrats and Republicans alike.

The county election had resulted in a half-Democratic, half-Republican victory. Hitherto, party principle had governed the voters solely, but this year a serpent had entered into the Republican Eden. The black vote had always come in solid Republican, but Bud Osborne, colored lawyer and attorney at

the bar, had won a case over the head of Judge Paine, county attorney, and he must needs test his power. He spoke his treason to "Ole Man Dancy," one of the faithful:

"We-all been 'lectin' dis heah co't-house click evah yeah. Whut is we gittin' outen hit? They-all hol's a carcass en 'cides who we-all gwine vote fuh. *We-all* kin hol' us a carcass fuh de same identical puhpose."

That night, in "carcass" assembled, the ultimatum was formed. Votes without representation would no longer be tolerated. Bud Osborne himself must be put on the ticket for county recorder. The black vote had spoken, and it was so.

The Democrats were at their wits' end. This would bring in the doubtful negro vote solid; something must be done. Whereupon, they also forgathered in caucus, and something always happens in caucus. Spotted Pony, a half-blood Cheyenne, was put up for recorder, and proved an effective counter irritant. Never was there such a fight; never such phenomenal trade in bad fire water and chickens.

Election Day found both factions outwardly sure of victory and Sandville at a white heat of excitement. Tickets were frightfully mutilated, scratched, and split and wrangled over. The suspense of the candidates was a pitiful sight to see. They and their wives sat up all night for the returns. They began coming in scatteringly. Dixon went Democratic. Anderson carried Arapahoe and Cimmaron. Fairview, the black township, of course, solid for Osborne. Hope and despair played hide and seek.

And next day, when it was all over, they had drawn even. Spotted Pony was elected recorder; each party had taken the bitter with the sweet—honors and dishonors were evenly divided.

The town was surprisingly quiet for an after-election night. The defeated candidates on both sides had drowned

their sorrows, and the successful ones were heroically restraining their joy and consoling their less fortunate comrades. There was neither wailing nor repoicing. Success and defeat sat jointly upon the throne, and even the torchlight parade was dropped. The condition of Sandville was abnormally normal.

At home, by his cleared-off supper table, sat John Anderson, "ablest speaker in the Democratic ranks," and successful candidate for representative on that ticket, turning over sadly the pages of the speech he would never make. If things had been otherwise, if success had not come thus half-hearted, he would have been at that moment standing before his people, seeing them thrill to his words, respond to his pæan of victory, take to their hearts his simple thanks. Like a man in defeat he sat, and ever and anon, his eye falling upon the place where some favorite sentence illumined the page, his lips would move, his blue eyes narrowed to slits, and, gazing far out over the heads of an unseen throng, his great red head would wag slightly in emphasis—but, alas! from the room beyond came, not the applause of the throng, but the sound of his wife washing the supper dishes.

At a table in the Royal Queen "café and meals served," a party of strangely tranquil politicians were eating the supper of discontent. When the stewed peaches were reached, Doc Beal, the party pessimist, looked about solemnly at that sad company of lost election bets.

"I'd 'a' bet my head," he remarked dejectedly, "on Sam Burrows gettin' in!"

"Well, Doc," said Simeon Larsen, "it's a good thing fer you nobody thought enough o' your offer to take you up."

Doc Beal glared at him. Doc had lost a suit of clothes on Burrows.

"You'd 'a' bet yer last cent yourself, if you'd had anything to bet," he said savagely.

But Simeon felt that he had ascended to a high place among the political prophets. Was he not the only man present who had possessed sufficient foresight to keep his money off the wrong man? His tone was gently commiserating when he answered:

"Not on Sam, Doc—not on Sam."

"You got a lot o' hindsight, you have! Shouldn't wonder but what after the inauguration you could tell who's goin' to be President o' these United States this comin' term."

Simeon's answer rebuked him loftily:

"Oh, I don't know. I won a little bet on Anderson. I notice *he* went in a-whoopin'."

"Well, now, Prophet Elisha, who you bettin' on fer president?"

"Well, I tell you, boys"—Simeon's tone was that of a man whose conclusions were the outcome of grave consideration—"I'm a Democrat through and through, but I been a-watchin' politics pretty close this year, and we ain't got a ghost of a show. Roosevelt's goin' to be our next president, all we can do."

"Are you bettin' on him?" asked Uncle Peter Lowrie, who would have been a gambler if he had believed in it, and who was braving the wrath of his wife to stay down with the boys and hear them talk things over.

It was like Uncle Peter to ask that question, and Simeon answered him off-hand:

"Oh, I'm not doin' much bettin' this year. I don't make a practice o' puttin' money on elections."

Doc Beal saw his chance.

"No, you don't make a practice o' takin' any chances. I'll bet you a new pair o' shoes on Bryan myself."

Simeon hesitated, but he had his reputation to sustain.

"Sure, I'll take it; but I hate t' do it—you're goin' to lose."

"We'll see who loses to-morrow night, when the returns get in."

The exhilaration of betting was not to be withstood. Moreover, the disappointment of both sides seemed to be not so much for the candidates who lost as for the lack of the celebration held always on the night after election. There was little enough in the way of entertainment—and now to be cheated of this—it was more than mortal Sandvillian could bear; and they presently found themselves across the street, in a place of refreshment and light, and, after a little, cheer in the form of wild and reckless betting on the national election.

It was decided by acclamation that they should have the postponed celebration the next night, after the hack had brought the news.

Jim Eckstrom, defeated candidate for constable, confided privately to the assemblage that if Bryan was elected he would at once consummate a long-deferred marriage with Loretta Porter, and hinted largely that Sandville might lose him. Toasts were drunk to the pair, whereupon Jim, feeling that some explanation was due such old and true friends, confided to them that, as a matter of fact, he had a friend "in the East" who knew Bryan personally—boys together, went to school with him, all that sort of thing—and Jim's friend would do anything in the world Jim asked of him; and there were certain things a president could do as easy as not; there were plenty of good berths, which, to be sure, unless a fellow had a pull, et cetera, et cetera. All of which met with the admiring and unqualified approval of his confidants.

The next day was one of the most memorable in the history of Sandville. The pent-up excitement of weeks had its outlet in the most unheard-of wagers. By two o'clock in the afternoon

the town was like a bomb ready to explode.

The hack was due at four. They began looking for it at three, and at half past three there was a general exodus from the houses, and Sandville gathered in the main street to await the coming of Charley with the fateful tidings.

The air was charged with excitement, with occasional sputters of verbal pyrotechnics from the overconfident.

Charley was ten minutes late. The crowd stirred and murmured like a waiting mob.

"Here it comes!" went up the cry at last. A familiar cloud of dust, in the midst of which the hack presently materialized, was approaching about a mile up the road.

When he was near enough, and through the dust Charley had made out the crowd gathered in the street, comprehension dawned upon him, and, with it, something of his awful responsibility. The joy or despair of these people lay, as it were, in the hollow of his hand. On his first word trembled the fate of Sandville.

And then, and then, there entered into the soul of Charley Doud that fatal thing, the glory and the pride of power, which has been at the root of so much evil. The brown eyes twinkled just one twinkle, he flapped the lines, the long black snake twirled out and cracked gayly over the backs of the ponies, and the hack swept into Main Street, while the crowd, clamoring, closed in about it. They climbed up on the wheels, and, with one incoherent voice, demanded of Charley:

"Who's elected?"

When he could be heard, Charley Doud announced calmly:

"Bryan—by a big majority!"

Instantly the Democrats went mad. Charley was straightway forgotten, and, his work accomplished, he went peacefully to put up his ponies and then

to give himself over to watch the working of his word.

Democrats dashed in all directions to collect their bets. Doc Beal, scurrying along the street, with a broad grin on his face, spied Simeon Larsen, and, seizing him by the arm, dragged him into the general store, already agog with the news and business. He towed him along to the shoe counter in the rear, where he pirouetted twice around on the run-over heel of his left boot, and demanded his shoes.

"Go on—git 'em, git 'em! You need 'em bad enough!"

"Reason I *bet* shoes. I always think before I bet. You'd ought t' try that, Si."

"Don't give me none o' your advice. I bet, an' I'm payin'."

Doc asked for tens, put them on himself, and, when Simeon had paid the three dollars, wore them, squeaking lustily, up to the front of the store. The place looked as if it had advertised to sell out at one cent on the dollar. They were doing a hilarious business in hats, caps, boots and shoes, suits, saddles, and boxes of stale Lowneys, bought by the young society men of Sandville for the daughters of Democratic fathers.

Across the way, it looked like a run on the bank. As many as six good losers, each with his satellite winner gesticulating at his elbow, were lined up at the cashier's window.

Melancholy indecision fled from the place, and in its stead reigned rage and victory. Even the Republicans were glad to have it settled one way or the other. It was better to go gloriously down to defeat than to stand, as they had, perched on the fence between the promised land and the country of oblivion. There was something to be done and said in defeat, reasons to propound, campaign mistakes to be pointed out. Even the defeated local candidates were

dragged from their slough of despond and rejoiced with their fellows.

Under cover of the confusion, Jim Eckstrom slipped quietly away, and presented himself, with the fire of ambition shining in his eyes, at the home of Loretta Porter. An hour later, Jim was down on Main Street asking if anybody had seen anything of Billy Rouse, the county clerk. A seraphic smile was upon his countenance, but it went unnoticed, for Jim was a Democrat, and they were wearing joy like a party badge. At six o'clock, Jim and Loretta were married, for, as Jim said, you've got to be under the tree when the plums drop.

By seven o'clock, when the Democrats sat down to supper at the Royal Queen, on Republican meal tickets, half of the wearing apparel, most of the personal property, and a good part of the real estate of Sandville had changed hands. There were those who ate with their hats on, because, in the Royal Queen, eating with one's hat on would never excite half so much comment as a fantastically shaved head, the always popular forfeit of the witty and impetuous.

Over in Doc Beal's barn, half a dozen boys were busy soaking twisted rags in kerosene, stuffing them into old tomato cans, and soldering the cans onto the ends of discarded broomsticks, hoe handles, and long strips of lumber. These were the torches which would light the way of the victors.

Suppers were hurried through, and again, in gala dress, Main Street held the population of Sandville.

Promptly at eight o'clock the parade issued out of Doc Beal's back yard and started upon its line of march. At its head, the Sandville Cornet Band, and after them the Democratic torchbearers, marching two and two, sixty strong. As they turned into Main Street, the band crashed into "A Hot Time," and a soprano cheer rose from

the sidewalk, augmented by a few bass notes, for most of the male Democrats were in the procession. The torchbearers burst into song, the happy ones on the walks took it up, and even the Republicans joined in the chorus; and the "hot time in the old town" that night had begun.

Down Main they went, and turned into Noble Avenue, followed by the cheering, singing, hooting crowd, across to the schoolhouse, stepping lively to the "Georgia Camp Meetin'," the flaring torches throwing grotesque shadows over the buildings and the people. Back into Main Street again, and up the length of it to the courthouse, where the speaking was to take place. The torches were thrown aside in a vacant lot, where they smoldered and smoked, while the crowd went in.

First came the Democratic regulars, filling the front of the house, along with their wives and their families, big and little; and Jim and Loretta Eckstrom, pacing self-consciously, arm in arm, took aisle seats on the second row. Then came, in semigayety, along with their sisters and their cousins and their aunts, the locally successful Republican candidates; and after them, by twos and threes and singly, the rest of the citizens of Sandville straggled in and sat down noncommittally in the back seats.

Then up the center aisle filed the local Democratic celebrities. First came those lately elected to office, and next, walking alone, John Anderson, the speaker of the evening, tall and angular in his blue serge; and after him the band. Applause greeted their appearance, and some hysterical shouting while they took their seats on the platform, composing themselves gravely; and gravely, one by one, shifting the pose, as if spoken to by a photographer arranging a group. And then, in the little hush that followed, Doc Beal, the

prominent politician, squeaked noisily up the aisle to a front seat.

The probate judge elect rose and proceeded to preside. First, the band played "A Hot Time" again, since there was nothing else so appropriate. The enthusiasm of the audience was bubbling over, and broke into thunderous applause at the least provocation.

"The Young Ladies' Quartet of Cimarron Township" sang a song they had made famous during the last county campaign, something or other to the tune of "Good-by, My Lover, Good-by," in which there were references to people in no wise connected with the election of the President of the United States.

The song literally brought down the house, and the band began playing "The Star-spangled Banner" to quiet them. That end accomplished, the speaker of the evening was introduced.

John Anderson rose amid the plaudits of his townspeople. He waited gravely for the confusion to subside, his hands hanging loosely at his side, as he had so often stood; and when there was quiet, he began speaking.

"Fellow citizens, ladies," he began. "We have come together to-night in celebration of a brilliant victory, the victory of the great Democratic party, which has, with *one* voice, elevated to the highest seat in the land our peerless leader, William Jennings Bryan."

The audience went wild at the name. John Anderson did not move, but waited, immobile, for the clamor to subside. Then he resumed:

"By an overwhelming majority have the people of the nation chosen him to pilot the ship of state over the stormy waters that beset her. We are here to lay aside all our selfish, petty, personal interests and to join in the great anthem of joy that is rising to-night from every city, town, and hamlet in our fair land."

Again his voice was drowned in a storm of applause.

"For the next four years, the United States may rest secure in the knowledge that there is at its head an honest man, an able statesman, an invincible advocate, and a noble and dignified executive."

Applause, and shouts of: "Bryan! Bryan!" "Hooray for Bill!"

"Valiantly have the hosts of the Democratic party fought their way to victory, proudly have they borne the banner of the party until at last it floats over the capitol of this country, the promise and guarantee of prosperity and plenty to the people."

Here the speech was interrupted again by round after round of applause, and, while the place resounded with the cheering, two well-dressed strangers came in at the door and took seats in the rear and directly back of old Mr. Miller, proprietor of the general store, sitting sadly among the drooping Republicans. One of these strangers leaned forward and touched him on the shoulder. Mr. Miller turned.

"Well, I be blamed! How'd you get here, Mr. Polk?"

"Got a team and drove over from Kingfisher. No more loop the loops with Charley. Broke everything I had in my sample case the last trip."

They were almost shouting, to be heard above the tumult.

"Just get in?"

"About five minutes ago. Thought the town had eloped. Followed the noise."

Order restored, Anderson here took up the thread of his discourse.

"When, at the beginning of this campaign," he said, "there arose at the head of the party the one man recognized, even by his enemies, as the only man in America to-day preëminently fitted to grace the presidential chair—the one man strong enough and big enough to bear the burden of that high office—at that time, I say, there was no more doubt than there is at this moment of

the election of the Honorable William Jennings Bryan!"

Again the name's mad magic, and the audience stamped and shouted, clapped and whistled, and they kept it up and kept it up. John Anderson did not change his position, but his blue eyes gleamed with satisfaction. It was a great moment. The house shook with the salvos.

Speechless on the back row, the two strangers faced each other, amazement struggling with their incredulity. Then rapidly they began to speak:

"For the Lord's sake, Billy, what's wrong here?"

"That's what he said—*Bryan!*"

"Well, say, don't they know it's Roosevelt?"

"They certainly think Bryan's elected. What'll we do?"

"We've got to tell them!" And the stranger leaned forward again, grasped old Mr. Miller by the shoulder, and said something into his ear.

"*What! He wasn't!*" yelled that gentleman, his voice lost in the general clamor.

"Straight goods!" shouted back the stranger. "We left Kingfisher at four o'clock; saw the returns myself. *Land-slide* for Roosevelt!"

Old Mr. Miller was hanging limply across the back of his chair, his good ear cupped in his hand. There was no doubting that the man spoke truth.

"Tell 'em, dern 'em! Tell 'em!" he said, in fierce ecstasy.

"*You tell 'em!*"

"*I can't! They'd mob me!*"

And the stranger saw his duty.

He rose to his feet, and held up one hand as if to command silence. John Anderson, wondering, but at ease in any situation, nodded to him. Every one turned to look.

"Might I—be allowed to—say something?" he asked, addressing Anderson. Mr. Polk was not a speechmaker.

"Certainly," said Anderson, and every eye fixed itself upon the new-comer.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began. He did not know what he was going to say, or how. "I have on several occasions visited your little city. I—have met many of your citizens. I—have always had a warm spot in my heart for your—beautiful little city."

It was not an easy job, but he had started it.

"I find myself in a very embarrassing position—or—rather—I find *you* in an embarrassing position. It seems that there has been some mistake—some misunderstanding. I have just come from Kingfisher—I left there 'at four o'clock——"

By this time several people in the audience had whispered to their neighbors that it was "the traveling man for Bryce."

"The truth is—I am sorry—but the fact is—*Roosevelt* won the election for President of the United States by a tremendous majority!"

If the stranger had been a hypnotist, these people his subjects, and his news the sudden command, "Rigid!" they could have been no more firmly transfixed. Not an eyelid winked, not a sound escaped them. John Anderson stood rooted to the spot, a statue of petrified dignity.

After what seemed the passage of five long minutes, a man got up from a front seat, and, in a pair of shoes that squeaked protestingly and loudly, one Doc Beal tiptoed down the center aisle. When he neared the door, Simeon Larsen leaned out to him and said, in a voice meant to be funny:

"That's *hindsight*, Doc!"

At that moment a little brown figure stole out at the door, and the sound of a crutch was heard tapping stealthily and swiftly down the street. Charley Doud was going home, and pausing not upon the manner of his going.

A Chat With You

ABOUT the commonest way of describing a story, we suppose, is to say either that it is interesting or that it is not. And yet the word "interesting" hardly ever means the same thing twice. It is by no means an adequate description of any story. It is just a rough and general classification. There are so many different degrees of interest, from the mild sort that permits a man to doze off during a good sermon to the intense sort that keeps him awake all night when he needs the sleep. There are so many different sorts of interest. There is the painful and morbid sort that might hold a man rooted to the ground watching an execution, although he wished himself away. There is the pleasurable sort, awakened in us sometimes by music, sometimes by stories, sometimes by the words of our friends.



IT is a fact that the painful sort of interest is seldom the most complete. Pain or horror rarely grasp the whole attention the way a great sweep of pleasurable emotion does. Macbeth has time to think of many extraneous and trifling details during the most trying moments of an awful tragedy. The man waiting sentence from the judge notices a lot of little things about the courtroom, although Heaven knows his interest in what the judge has to say is intense and poignant enough. To be really completely interested in anything means that you have no consciousness of anything else at all at the time. Some people feel that way when they hear

Tchaikowsky's Sixth Symphony, for instance. A man who is thoroughly head over heels in love, and discovers for the first time that the girl feels much the same way herself, is generally in such a frame of mind for a moment that he doesn't know where he is, and doesn't care. Nothing matters but one thing, and that absorbs the whole consciousness of the individual. Such a man, as they say, is walking on air. That describes a really complete and absorbing interest about as much as any phrase that happens to be handy just now. And it is always applied to people who are happy.



THAT is why we think that a story to be strong does not need to be unpleasant. If it is not unpleasant, the chances for its really holding a great part of a reader's interest are much better. The writer who "wants to make your flesh creep" has in most cases mistaken sound and fury for real strength. There is nothing in the world to be gained by shocking or horrifying people. Sweetness and strength should to a great extent go hand in hand, and with the best writers of fiction they do. Henry Herbert Knibbs has written the complete novel which opens the next number of the magazine. It is not at all the mere fact that it is interesting that makes it such a good story. It is the kind of interest. A story may interest you in such a fashion that you are unwilling to lay it down, and yet the experience of reading it may be anything

A CHAT WITH YOU—Continued.

but pleasant. But when the excitement aroused in you is of a delightful, tingling kind, when there is laughter, humanity, and kindness, as well as the keener thrills of strife and adventure, the tale is really out of the ordinary. "Still-Going-North Stanley" is the name of the story. It is a novel of the Canadian forests, of the fur hunters, the prospectors, finally of the financiers and railroad builders. A big, stirring, real story of the sort that you have learned to identify with *THE POPULAR*.



IF you have ever tried sketching with pen or pencil you know that it is easier to make an ugly picture than a beautiful one. Almost any one can catch the expression of a gargoye, while the Antinous has baffled many an artist. It is so in writing. To make the style and narrative beautiful and charming without being insipid is the hallmark of genuine artistry. H. de Vere Stacpoole has it. His story called "Quits," in the next issue of *THE POPULAR*, describes the advance of the French Foreign Legion southward through the desert. You will find it a remarkable and beautiful piece of word painting, something that gives a clear picture of the thing, and at the same time stirs the emotion and admiration in an indefinable way. "Quits," aside from the way it is written, is a fine short story of adventure. You will find that this new series of stories gets better as it goes on. You will like it as well as anything Stacpoole has done for us.



HUMOR is a hard thing to get, a valuable thing to have, a good thing to come in contact with. We believe that in *THE POPULAR* in the past we have published some of the funniest stories of American life of the past

ten years. "A Dozen Eggs" and "Shibboleth," by A. M. Chisholm, "On Irish Hill," by Peter B. Kyne, are stories that come back to us now as good samples of something worth laughing at. We will have a new series of funny stories of the prize ring by H. C. Witwer during the present season—and if you have read his story "Confidence" in a recent number of the magazine you have some idea of what they will be like. In the next issue, out two weeks from to-day, you will find one of the funniest stories that Ellis Parker Butler, author of "Pigs Is Pigs," has ever written, and there will be more from Butler later on. The story in the next number is called "The Ambition of Barnabee Holt."



IT is a long time since we have heard anything from the versatile Tommy Williams. His last adventure, if you remember, the chronicle of which we published in *THE POPULAR* about a year ago, carried him into the court of the Hapsburgs, and gave some insight into the diplomatic tangles that preceded the present great war. The next story, which is to appear in two parts, will start in the next issue of the magazine. When you read it you will learn what Tommy has been doing, and you will also get a most amazing glimpse into the secrets of the European chancelleries. It is called "The Familiar," the scene is New York and the wilderness of the Balkans, and the characters—some American and some foreign—are all interesting. In the next issue also there will be a splendid detective story by Lee Foster Hartman, a college story by Ralph Paine, and a lot of other good things. Also, please look on this page in the next issue for an important and most interesting announcement of something big and new.



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FIELD - TRAP AND TARGET

I am a little mountain goat,
I sip the morning dew,
And sometimes jump from jag to jag.
Do you?

JUST what sort of a "jag" our poetic friend had in mind is perhaps best left to the imagination. However, did he perchance liken himself to the original mountain goat, he must indeed be nimble.

We have noted the domesticated hen literally walk on eggs without even scratching them. We have watched the patient burro with pack on back nimbly pick its way down the sloping and rock-strewn mountain trail without so much as disturbing a stone. But never have we seen such a thorough example of sure-footedness as that displayed by our friend the mountain goat.

We have sat on a boulder high up amid the clouds and watched one of these specimens of almost perfect equilibrium stop in his or her tracks along mountainside, and nibble at some luscious bit of plant life, balancing the meanwhile on some jagged piece of rock.

We have watched the youngsters gambol among the crags—leaping hither and thither with utter abandon, yet always reaching the destination sought, and landing almost always securely on four feet.

And when the sound of our gun has disturbed the quiet

of the mountains, we have seen the herd dash quickly to a place of safety, rushing over crags and jags—leaping here and there to footing places that seemed well-nigh impossible to such bulky creatures—and then go scampering up the almost vertical side of the gully in a well-planned and executed program of escape.



"Never have we seen such a thorough example of sure-footedness as that displayed by the mountain goat."

Yes, there may be more varieties of jags than we have in mind—there may be more nimble creatures than the Rocky Mountain goat—but if there are we have failed to include them in our limited knowledge of Nature—human and otherwise.

THE spring is here. Already the wild duck has taken its departure. The track of the rabbit grows fainter. The frost has left the ground, and little patches of green are sparkling in the sunshine. The pussy willow is popping its furry head out of its tiny pod, and the thrilling notes of the songbirds echo from the brush.

The spring is here. There's a subtle sense of activity springing up round about

All over the great U. S. A. the season is well on its way, and numerous tournaments will soon be in full blush. And this brings us immediately to the next Grand American, to be staged in St. Louis in August. Preparations for this tournament of tournaments have been in order for some time, and a most wonderful week of trapshooting is promised. Needless to say, all the cracks of the country will be there, and if you are wise you will plan early to get your shot at the wily clay bird.

THE East has set up active competition with the West, in things relating to trapshooting, and this spring will witness the opening of a trapshooting school on the



Trapshooting at Asbury Park

us. The ardent trapshooter has emerged from his winter hibernation, and the sound of popping shotguns is heard in the offing. Already the old familiar gun club is being doused with a fresh coat of paint, and the expert trap is exercising its throwing arm.

In Cuban waters, Uncle Sam's jackies have been going through their spring maneuvers, keeping their eyes and arms in trim meanwhile with occasional trapshooting matches. In fact, Guantanamo, Cuba, has been the scene of a real, registered trapshoot this year, held by some of the officers of Uncle Sam's navy.

end of one of Atlantic City's famous piers. In view of the pronounced success of the trapshooting range at Venice Park, California, it is expected that the well-known New Jersey seaside resort will far surpass its now well-known rival for trapshooting honors.

The school will be in charge of an expert trapshooter, and it is planned to give instructions to all who desire to become proficient in the Sport Alluring. This applies to both men and women.

Kipling has said that "The female of the species is more deadly than the male." Here's a chance to prove it.

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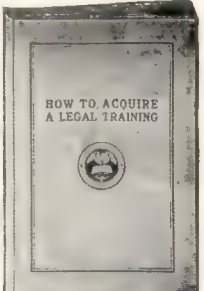
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He is one of the greatest writers of adventure we have. Read this sample of his latest series, "Stories of the Legion," which are now running in the Popular Magazine. Even from this bit you must admit that Stacpoole is the real thing:

As they marched, sometimes came marching abreast of them, miles away, vast sand devils, recalling the jinn released from the bottle in the Arabian tale. Sometimes the devils would move as though waltzing with viewless partners, but the Legion scarcely cast an eye upon them. The trumpet of doom alone could have arrested the attention of that vast centipede, sun-dazzled or moonlit, exhausted, dead to everything but the necessity of movement. The water ran short, but still they marched; men fell out only to be tied to the tails of the ammunition carts, where they had either to be dragged along the sands or march; feet bled, eyes were blinded, brains reeled, but the purpose of the mechanism never failed, nor did the movement falter.

Mixed with the creak and rattle of the baggage and ammunition carts, above the dull pounding and scuffling of feet, you would hear the growl of voices breaking out all down the line. A grumble half a mile long; the voice of the bruised, battered, and bedeviled soul of the Legion. This centipede, with a brain for every pair of legs, possessed a single soul. Artist, author, bank clerk, ex-soldier, or apache, optimist, pessimist, grumbler, or man of fortitude—all were subdued to the same medium. Like the oars of the Trireme or the bricks for the Pyramids, the rifles of the Legion linked the minds of their holders in a common bondage of thought—or want of thought—gave them a common tongue to express the suffering common to all.

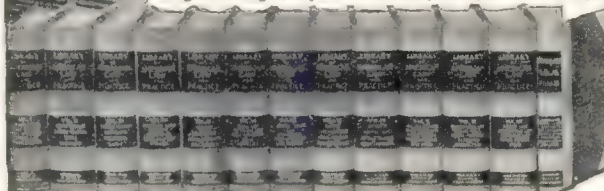
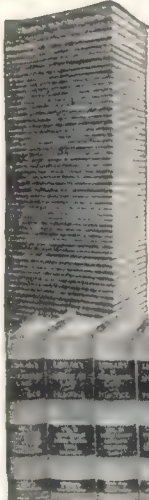
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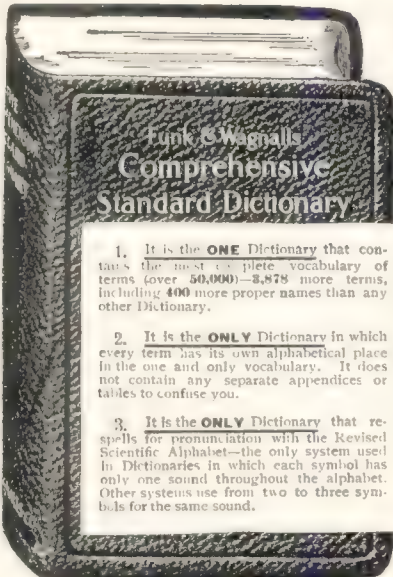
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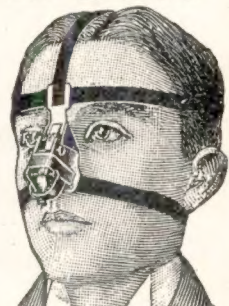
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